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Lifecycle 2 Vol1 #3 11/99

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Next Gen

Next Generation Magazine

The Next Zelda

The First Screens

LIVE FROM TOKYO

PLAYSTATION 2 IS HERE!



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- First pix of PS2 games!
- First pix of the PS2 hardware!
- Exclusive! The Bouncer —
the best thing on PS2!

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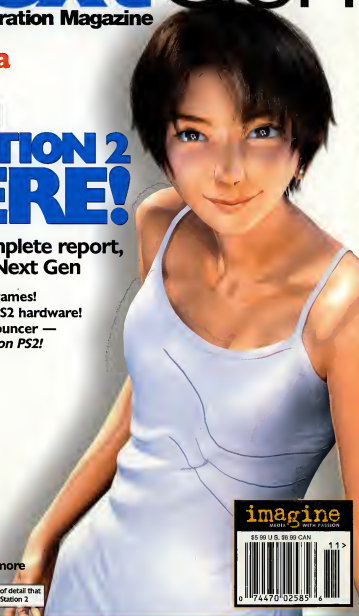
Games Rated
Including:

Soul Calibur, Ready 2 Rumble,
Drakan, C&C: Tiberian Sun,
Jet Force Gemini, Tony Hawk,
Madden, & GameDay

PLUS:
First Looks

Dead or Alive 2, Chrono Cross,
Turok 3, Zombie's Revenge, + 22 more

Namco's Reiko Nagase character demonstrates the kind of detail that can be animated in realtime, thanks to the power of PlayStation 2



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NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

At an eagerly attended press conference in Tokyo, Sony reveals the name, price, games, and strategy for its next-generation machine

30

PlayStation 2 at a glance

Name PS2
Manufacturer Sony
Price \$199 (base model)
Release Date Nov. 12, 2000
OS Windows 98
Ports FireWire, USB, iLink
Games 100+
Website www.playstation.com



PlayStation 2 ARRIVES

After months of rumors, speculation, and leaks, the PlayStation 2 is finally here. Sony's new console is a true next-generation machine, offering a host of new features and a host of new games. The PS2 is a true next-generation machine, offering a host of new features and a host of new games. The PS2 is a true next-generation machine, offering a host of new features and a host of new games.

Shigeru Miyamoto

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Dreamcast launch

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Drakan

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C&Q: Renegade

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News

In a time of great change, you need news you can trust. Lucky thing we have some then, huh?

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The hottest games you can't play yet

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Special

PlayStation 2 makes a grand entrance

You need to know this: PS2 is officially unveiled at Tokyo Game Show, and we've got the full story on the hardware, the games, and Sony's big, big plans.....30

Half-Life, Zelda, Diablo. They have one thing in common: none fit into neat categories. Are we seeing the death of the genre?...100

11/99



EDITORIAL

The talk of the town in Tokyo



It was hard to be in Tokyo this week on the 13th without hearing about PlayStation2 — never mind when I was at Sony's official announcement or Tokyo Game Show — Ken Kutaragi seemed to be on TV 24 hours a day, on news stations frequently interrupted by videogame commercials. Games are a more accepted part of the popular culture in Japan, but with the success of Dreamcast's launch, it seems that the US market is poised to make its first transition to a new generation of systems without the slump (don't say crash) that happened between 8- and 16-bit or 16- and 32-bit generations. That kind of continuity should go a long way toward helping games in the US get the kind of respect they deserve. PlayStation2 shouldn't hurt either — not only is it the best videogame system ever, but Sony has plans far beyond just selling the system to gamers: with DVD and broadband capabilities, PlayStation2 could be the machine that gets a game system in every house in America. The full report from Tokyo, including excerpts from an exclusive interview with Sony's Phil Harrison, starts on page 30.


Chris Charlton



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■ Zeld: Gaiden



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■ Dead or Alive 2



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■ Soul Calibur



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■ Tony Hawk

→Finals

Thirty-four featured reviews (whoa!) including:

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→Ending

All good things much eventually cease

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TWISTED METAL 4

PlayStation 4

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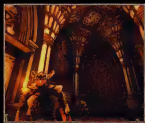
Sweet Tooth's back and in charge of the original car combat freakshow, *Twisted Metal 4*. With new interactive battlegrounds, wicked characters, innovative weapons, killer graphics, a hell-raising soundtrack, car customization and best of all, Sweet Tooth's evil henchmen. Man, as if clowns weren't scary enough.



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Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild



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News

Game industry news and analysis



■ In this event you haven't seen Sega's TV spot, this is a still from the game that features a number of characters from Sega's classic line-up, prominently including Dreamcast (into the brain). Turn the page for a complete list of who's who.

■ SAY GOODBYE, OLD BOY

Finally, Game Boy 2

After 12 years, the most successful game platform in history will get a successor

➔ Although sales of Game Boy Color continue (Game Boy sells about three million units a year like clockwork), Nintendo has announced the upcoming Game Boy Advanced (not the final name). The new handheld will debut in Japan in August 2000, with a US launch following in time for the 2000 holiday season. No word on price yet, other than Nintendo's usual "aggressively priced for the mass market."

Game Boy Advanced will use a 32-

bit RISC CPU, developed by the UK-based ARM Corporation (which, by the way, built the first RISC-based PC), and a color LCD screen capable of 240x160 pixel display. It uses two AA alkaline batteries, which Nintendo says should last about 20 hours per pair.

As with many Nintendo hardware products, some rather grand plans are in the works. Game Boy Advanced will be able to connect via cellular phone to the Internet for downloading software,

multiplayer games, and access to chat and email. There are also plans for a digital camera, which would allow players to see who they're playing ("send a picture over the phone" gizmos are currently in vogue in Japan).

In addition, Nintendo has joined with Konami in a joint development house called Mobile 2i to develop software for the new system. Further, since some level of compatibility is planned between the new handheld and Nintendo's upcoming home console, Dolphin, Mobile 2i will also be involved in working out exactly how, and in what

GAME BOY ADVANCED SPECS

CPU: memory-embedded 32-bit RISC

LCD: reflective TFT color LCD

Display Size: 40.8mm x 61.2mm

Resolution: 240x160

Max. # of simultaneous colors: 60,000

Size: 60mm H x 135mm W x 25mm D

Power: two AA alkaline

Battery life: 20 hours

Weight: 140g

form, this interaction will be.

Lastly, Game Boy Advanced will have the Game Boy Color chip embedded into its architecture, thus ensuring compatibility with an entire dozen years' worth of Game Boy software, instantly giving the new system the largest game library on the planet at launch. Smart move.

NextGen



■ THE COUNTDOWN IS OVER ...

We Have Lift Off!

Dreamcast launches to the tune of \$97 million in first-day sales

➔ If Sega has learned anything from its failed Saturn, it's how not to launch a system. With more than 15,000 retail stores across the nation stocking Dreamcast on 9/9/99, the system was anything but a surprise. Many gamers lined up outside the 400 stores nationwide that participated in a special midnight Dreamcast

WHO IS IT?

■ This English mathematician developed the first theory of a "universal computing machine," the benchmark test for artificial intelligence, and the first game-playing program

400 stores nationwide participated in a special midnight Dreamcast sale

sale. With systems, VMUs, peripherals, and 18 launch titles all up for offer, Sega claims that total Dreamcast sales for the 24-hour period of 9/9/99 equaled \$97,904,618.09.

It was then that Sega's \$100 million marketing push went into full effect. Not only was the system a prominent sponsor of the MTV music video awards, but Sega had several celebrities at midnight sales locales throughout the country: *Baywatch* star Donna D'Errico and Vern "Austin Powers Mini-Me" Troyer were in San Jose, Calif. at Software, Etc., while September *Playboy* cover girl Rena Merz (formerly Sable of the WWF) joined the Minnesota Vikings' Tony Williams and Dwayne Rudd in the Minneapolis FuncoLand. In Atlanta, *Baywatch* and *Silk Stalkings* star Mitzi Kapture joined the eager pre-order crowd.

But at the Electronic Boutique in the Las Vegas suburb of Henderson, Nevada, the crowd was the star attraction. Roughly 500 people who had pre-ordered the system lined up for the 12:01 a.m. rush. According to store manager Alex Dro Danielian, the last customer left at about 6:15 a.m., and the store reopened several hours later for its regular hours.

"We shattered the one-day sales record for one EB," said Danielian. "We moved over \$160,000 worth of



■ A month before launch, Sega held a Dreamcast press summit at its US headquarters in San Francisco. For the event, locals entered a Sonic look-alike contest. The winner (unfortunately not our photo subject) left with a Dreamcast and free first-party Sega games for life

merchandise in that 24-hour period." But couldn't that include some *Final Fantasy VII* sales?

"Some people who actually only came in for *Final Fantasy VII*," Danielian replies, "have purchased a Dreamcast."

Two days after the launch, Danielian explains there's still been a steady stream of business, and his store totaled more than 700 pre-sold units. Yet despite the overwhelming sales success, Dreamcast's launch hasn't been perfect. A run of bad software has triggered a fair number of returns. At deadline, the bad software was limited to *Ready 2 Rumble*, *Blue Stinger*, and *Sonic Adventure*, some copies of which would not even run.

Although the problem wasn't



■ Backstage at a recent *Blameless Ladies* concert, *BNi*, guitarist-singer Ed Robertson, who's also an avid *Next Generation* reader, receives a Dreamcast from Sega publicist Heather Hawkins. Robertson, a longtime gamer, tested the classic Konami code for us as well. (Thanks again for the passes, Ed)

widespread, it caused plenty of comments on Usenet. Yet Sega and retailers have been swift to respond. The bad run of *Sonic Adventure* GD ROMs was quickly narrowed down to a group of serial numbers. During his phone interview with **Next Generation**, Darsheian explained that he was currently sorting a stack of *Sonic* games, looking for ones that worked while customers patiently waited.

Despite this minor setback, the

IT IS...

■ Alan Turing. The chess-playing program was too complicated for computers in the 1950s, so he ran the program in his head. It — unlike Turing — lost a lot.

DATASTREAM

Car *Naughty Dog's* Andy Gavin drove during college, while working on *Way of the Warrior: 10 Accord LX*. Car he drove after selling *Way of the Warrior: Lotus SE 300*. Car he drove after finishing *Crash 3: Mercedes 400SL*. Car *Naughty Dog's* Jason Rubin drove before working on *Way of the Warrior*: "It was white, American, and had a fake convertible top. We called it the *Ranchero*." Car he had while working on *Way of the Warrior*: '91 Toyota Celica. Car he bought after selling *Way of the Warrior*: Toyota Supra Twin Turbo. Car he bought after *Crash 2* was *Ferrari*: Ferrari 355 Targa. Car he drives to work: Toyota Altima. Why? Morgan, *Naughty Dog's* canine employee, "doesn't like the Ferrari." Source: Andy Gavin.



■ The Electronics Boutique in Henderson, Nevada, shattered company sales records, as more than 500 people turned up at midnight to pick up their pre-ordered systems. One man arrived as early as 10 a.m. the morning of September 8.

first-day sales have brought a surge of positive energy to Sega. "Original projections were to sell 1 million consoles by the end of the year and \$5 million by March 31, 2000," says Chris Gilbert, Sega's senior vice president of sales. "However, in light of the past 24 hours, we are now re-evaluating these forecasts."

While it's been known for some time that there were 300,000 pre-sales of Dreamcast, tripling the previous record set in 1995 by Sony for its North American PlayStation launch, Gilbert admits he didn't think the launch could be as big as it was.

"Our wildest expectations have been exceeded," Gilbert says, "and

"Our wildest expectations have been exceeded, and this is only the beginning!"

— Sega Senior VP of Sales, Chris Gilbert

we believe this is only the beginning of a phenomenally successful run for Sega Dreamcast."

Sega's certainly now off to a good start, and with the holidays around the corner, there's no question the numbers will continue to rise. The company is certainly to be commended for the best launch (and launch line-up) on record. Sega has won a minor battle with consumers, specifically early adopters, and the company still has some

time to build an installed base before Nintendo and Sony emerge from the furious mist of development with their own respective systems. But if anything's certain, it's that any momentum built in this industry is just as easily lost. Sega's going to have to keep moving, keep developers and publishers interested, and continue to introduce a variety of quality software to keep consumers and retailers happy. It has taken the first step. — Tom Russo

Putting the Cast in Dreamcast



1. Executioner — House of the Dead 2
2. Setene Strike — Ready 2 Rumble
3. Afro Thunder — Ready 2 Rumble
4. Sonic — Sonic Adventure
5. Take-Arashi — Virtua Fighter 3tb
6. Sarah Bryant — Virtua Fighter 3tb
7. Zombie Keen — House of the Dead 2
8. Blazers' Brian Grant — NBA 2K
9. Slave Zero — Slave Zero
10. Lau Chan — Virtua Fighter 3tb
11. Tails — Sonic Adventure
12. Big the Cat — Sonic Adventure
13. Gum Rock — Power Stone
14. Zombie Randy — House of the Dead 2
15. Jim McMahon — NFL 2K
16. Judgment — House of the Dead 2



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WHAT'S THE SECRET TO



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 ON WICKED FAST SUZUKI
 ALSTARE SUPERBIKES.
 IF THE PROS DON'T
 BEAT YOU THE
 BIKES WILL.

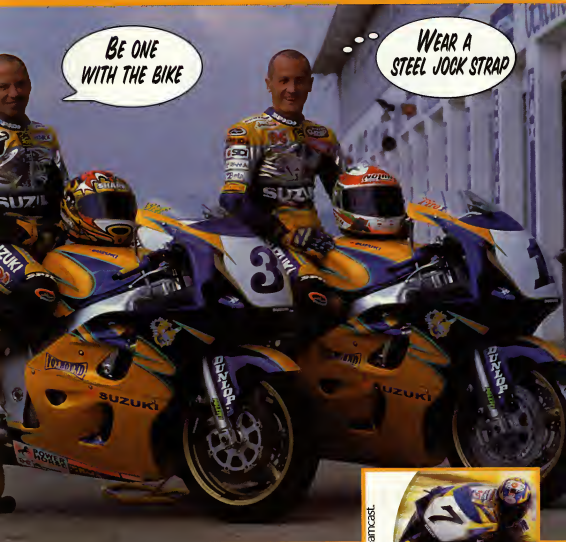
SUZUKI ALSTARE
 OFFICIAL
 GAME
 FACTORY SQUAD



RACING SUPERBIKES IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS?

BE ONE
WITH THE BIKE

WEAR A
STEEL JOCK STRAP



Sega © Dreamcast.



Computer Artworks Ltd.'s pre-rendering on GeForce 256. The spider creatures in the upcoming PC game are so detailed and smooth that they look almost pre-rendered.



■ THE BRAIN BEHIND THE BRAINS

NVIDIA's GeForce 256

Will the graphical heart of X-Box contend with PlayStation 2 and Dolphin?

As reported in the 12/99 issue of **Next Generation**, industry insiders from all corners of the industry are claiming that Microsoft has a new gaming console in the works, codenamed X-Box. Powered by either an Intel Celeron or Pentium III, the graphics pipeline of X-Box will likely take the

form of nVidia's GeForce 256 chip (formerly known as NV10). Here are some of the GeForce's advanced features:

- 15 polygons/sec
- 400 million pixels/sec
- 32 samples per clock
- Full-speed 8-tap antialiasing filtering

4 pixels per clock
1 GB/s CPU-to-GeForce memory via AGP 4X with Fast Writes
Hardware acceleration of the entire graphics pipeline: transform, lighting, setup, and rendering.

Robust support for DirectX 7 and OpenGL, including:

- Transform and lighting
- Cube environment mapping
- Projective textures
- Texture compression

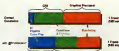
What makes nVidia's technology so exciting is that instead of just handling triangle setup and rendering (as is the case with every other consumer-level graphics accelerator), the GeForce additionally takes on transform and lighting responsibilities — thus enabling X-Box's processor to spend its time dealing with AI and advanced physics models instead of graphics. Unlike the Voodoo2 and upcoming geometry engines from other manufacturers, the GeForce delivers its geometry engine on one integrated chip.

At this point, Microsoft's X-Box, driven by the GeForce processor, will be in the same technical ballpark as PlayStation 2 and Dolphin, but the real winner will become evident when the software arrives. **NextGen**

HARDCORE

About fifteen years ago, instead of playing with the other kids after school, I would go home and go to bed. Reason being, if I fired up my NES right after school, my mom would only let me play for two or three hours. If I set my alarm for 1 a.m., however, I could play for six hours straight until I had to get ready for school. With no volume, of course, and on a 13-inch black-and-white TV, but I didn't mind. About three months ago, I needed to start working more overtime. I was a technician for the telephone company, so I was spending 14 hours a day in a van. Staring at my steering wheel one night, I realized how I could still work late and manage to play all of the games I thought I wouldn't have time for. I bought a new PlayStation, a 4-inch color TV, and an AC/DC converter to power them both. The setup cost around \$450 and took about two hours to install in the van, but I didn't mind.

scifer@cybernetx.net



■ Graph showing the advantages of a GeForce processor, and an image from the chip's physics and rendering demo



■ ...although they are made up of polygons. Computer Artworks says that its in-game creatures boast more triangles than Evolve's pre-rendered FMV sequences

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

→ **Sega pulled off the biggest launch in the history of videogames**, with Dreamcast selling nearly 400,000 units in five days. To celebrate the launch, the company also threw one of the industry's largest-ever parties, in a swank San Francisco club, with representatives from every major third-party publisher and developer present. More than one Sega employee was witnessed during the festivities

railing a glass and toasting ousted COO Bernie Stolar: "This was his launch," they would say; one or two were seen crying. **Crying was the last thing on Stolar's mind.** Making an appearance at ECTS a week earlier, Stolar was the belle of the ball. With an entourage of adoring fans, Bernie shook hands with anyone and everyone at Europe's ultimate game-industry event. On the subject of his departure from Sega, though, the former

COO remained silent. **GT Interactive, which has won some landmark copyright suits** against level-pack makers, is now on the other side of the witness stand. StarPlay (we've never heard of them either) is using the company for alleged piracy of *Alley 19 Bowling*. The company claims GT took a copy of StarPlay's bowling epic and distributed it unlawfully throughout Europe. StarPlay believes the case is worth \$10,000 in

direct damages and \$5,000,000 in punitive. GT is prepared to settle for a few copies of *Dover*. The courts will decide. **ArtX, maker of the graphics chip in Nintendo's Dolphin**, was scheduled to reveal that chip to the propellerheads of the world at the Microprocessor Forum engineering conference this fall. Now the firm has backed out of the conference, no doubt because Nintendo wouldn't sign its permission slip. **Graphics-card**

X-Box Update

More details emerge on Microsoft's foray into the console world, including a new code name

➔ After breaking the story last issue, **Next Generation** has learned more about Microsoft's X-Box "console PC" initiative. The system will

be a non-upgradable, closed box built using top-of-the-line PC components, including a 4 GB hard drive. Although X-Box is the name of the device, the development

program has the slicker code name "Mariner." Much like Dreamcast, output is possible either via a TV or a VGA monitor. This has led some to call it a "junior PC," but the closed nature of the box and planned 100% plug-and-play ease-of-use means that in practice it should function more like a console than a PC.

While we reported last month that the device would be powered by an Intel processor, sources at Advanced Micro Devices have since insisted that X-Box will be powered by an AMD Athlon processor. Also, while sources initially told us that X-Box would use a modified version of Windows CE, new sources have told us that the OS will in fact be a customized version of Windows 2000, which will install each game into a special directory to avoid any conflicts.

According to high-level sources at Sega of America, Sega has known about the Mariner project for some time and looks at it as "complementary" to Dreamcast. The idea is that since porting between Dreamcast and PC is so



easy (and about to get easier — the new version of the Win CE dev kit for Dreamcast 2.0, is getting high marks from developers), having yet another PC-like platform gives developers and publishers more incentive to develop for Dreamcast.

As for Microsoft, the official line has gone from "sounds like wishful thinking" to "this is a rumor" and it is not Microsoft's policy to comment on rumors. "We'll have more as it develops, including a comprehensive analysis of all four next-generation competitors — Microsoft, Sega, Sony, and Nintendo — next issue. **NextGen**

Is it a "junior PC"? Its closed nature and ease of use make it seem closer to a console

■ BUILDING A GAME MACHINE

AMD's New Athlon Processor

Laying the smack down on Intel

➔ AMD has begun shipping its newest processor, Athlon (formerly K7) out to retail. How does this news affect you personally? If you are looking to build the fastest gaming PC on the planet, read on.

Coming in at 500, 550, 600, and 650MHz flavors, the Athlon finally proves that AMD can compete with — if not beat — Intel in terms of raw processing muscle. Tested against a PIII 600MHz processor-based system, our 600MHz Athlon killed the competition in just about every test — especially when it came to games.

While Pentium III's only have 32KB of L1 cache, Athlon's have 128KB, and while Pentium III's sit on a 400MHz front side bus, Athlon rides a much swifter 200MHz pipe. AMD also has plans for doubling that speed in the not-so-distant future. A much-improved floating point math unit is responsible for a great deal of Athlon's improved gaming performance, and this time around (relative to the K6-2 and K6-3), gamers won't



■ As you can see, the Athlon looks exactly like a PIII. It's electronically different, however, so you will need a motherboard that supports it.

have to rely on 3DNOW!-supported titles to play games at faster rates than on Intel-based platforms.

While we do recommend this technology to gamers, our recommendation does come with a caveat. Intel has just launched a massive campaign to put an end to AMD's shenanigans by dropping the price of its processors to insanely low levels. For the first time, the fastest Intel CPUs on the market are less expensive than AMD's. So while the Athlon is a bit faster than the PIII, price may be reason enough to keep you in Intel's camp. Shop wisely! **NextGen**

WHAT IS X-BOX?

In case you missed last month's NG (shame on you!) here's the Cliffs Notes on X-Box: It's Microsoft's entry in the next-generation console wars: a non-upgradable, closed box packed with the latest PC hardware, including a DVD drive, AMD's Athlon processor, and nVidia's NV-10 graphics technology. The operating system — and overall system design — are courtesy of Microsoft, and the system is designed to be used as a game console and movie player, although internet and productivity applications will also run, and the system can be hooked to a VGA monitor as well as a TV. The planned cost? Under \$300.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb, executive producer, www.dailyradar.com

makers choose the most romantic names.

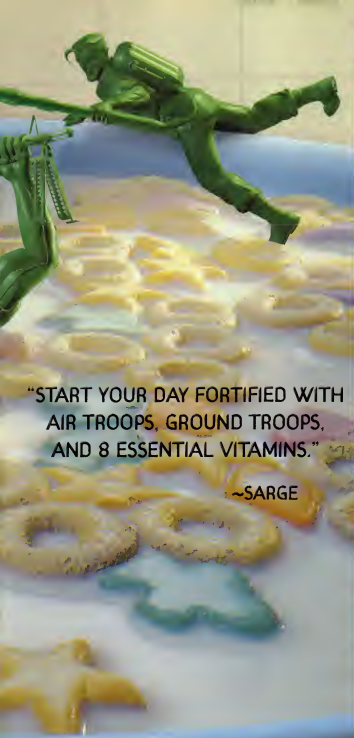
In keeping with the macho, blood-and-guts nomenclature of PC graphics chips (what could be more hard-assed than a collection of diodes!), nVidia has announced its new super accelerator: the GeForce (G= get it!). Meanwhile, 3Dix is secretly plotting its next step under the marly-man code-name "Napalm." While it's clear that every employee of both companies was

beaten regularly in high school, the trend must be put to an end. The solution? None in sight, as even usually midget-sized S3 joins the fray with its jungle cat of a chip, the Savage 2000. **While we're on the subject of names...** TEN has abandoned its original, pleasing acronym — Total Entertainment Network — and its my macho charter of all action games, all the time, to pursue the very serious business of backgammon at Pogo.com. In

the final acknowledgment that the mid-1990s feeding frenzy of venture capital pouring into online game networks was a massive waste of money, TEN put down the BIGs and picked up the B+N-G-Os. For those keeping score at home, that's "Graphics Cards are made by tough guys. Online Game Networks are for Granny!" **At the 37th Jamma Show**, Japan's pre-eminent gathering of arcade game makers, the beat went on. With every major

videogame maker unveiling games that involve singing, mixing songs, playing guitars, hitting drums, or otherwise making music, Korami found itself in quite a pickle. The master of the original beat game, Beatmania, Korami has lately taken to suing anyone making derivative works. If Jamma is any indication, Korami will soon be in litigation with every man, woman, child, and robot dog on the island of Japan.





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~SARGE



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Dave underestimated the party guests' hatred of charades.

Don't let this happen to you. With the new YOU DON'T KNOW JACK®, your PlayStation® game console may just be a life saver. Not to mention, one of the greatest party games ever invented. (Nude twister comes in a close second.)

One, two or three players at a time get scorched by JACK's sarcastic game show host. You and your friends wrestle over more than 1,400 seriously bent trivia questions on two

**If only he'd suggested
YOU DON'T KNOW JACK.**

CD's, while the rest of the party cat-calls, taunts and fights over who gets the controller next. So next time you throw a party, get YOU DON'T KNOW JACK and nobody gets hurt.



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■ MARCUS WEBB'S
Arcadia

The latest news from the coin-op front

SEGA ANNOUNCES HISTORIC PLANS

→ In a summer meeting with US arcade industry members, Sega of Japan chairman and CEO Isao Okawa denied that Sega is ignoring the arcade market.

"I hear many claims saying that Sega is leaving the arcade business," Okawa said. Then, looking into the eyes of the arcade industry, he declared with great emphasis: "THIS IS...NOT...SO!"

To prove Sega is as active as ever in the arcade arena, Okawa cited plans to release 30 Naomi games over the next 12 months. This would be the most ambitious arcade game release schedule for any factory in history if achieved, it will obviously be due to the sports-touted synergy between Dreamcast and its arcade sister, Naomi. The Sega arcade team plans to concentrate on much-limited titles in the first round, so by early next year you can look for the games currently under the working titles "Power Hoops" basketball, "Power Kick" soccer, and "Power Smash" tennis.

Okawa also sketched plans to "fuse" the arcade and console markets via Internet broadband service provided through a strategic partnership with A&T. Okawa envisions global, net-based player networks in which Sega would unite thousands of players at a time on a single game. Mc Okawa told arcade industry members that the A&T alliance would enable Sega to get a jump on the rest of the Internet community in providing broadband downloading capability. (Sega later pointed out that some 27 million players are expected to participate in online gaming by 2002.) Details of how such networks would promote arcade gameplay are unclear, but some form of cross-promotional, overlapping-play tournaments seems likely. Sega R&D chiefs have speculated in recent months that game updates could also someday be downloaded to arcade units on location, using the Naomi platform.

While Sega's parent company is already traded on the Nikkei stock market in Japan, Okawa also announced the company's plans to bring U.S. subsidiaries public in the USA. Acknowledging that past management errors cost Sega its console market leadership — and hundreds of millions of dollars in the last couple of years — Okawa vowed to correct those mistakes and "establish a new Sega." His words: "We are going to be reborn as Segs.com and are planning an IPO for this new company." The date of the eventual offering has not yet been disclosed, and no one at Sega Enterprises, the US coin-op division, could confirm any more specifics.

YOUR TURN TO PLAY, HEMINGWAY

→ The century's brainiest writer, Ernest Hemingway, always portrayed deep sea fishing as an ultimate test of physical toughness and moral courage.

Konami seems to agree: It is casting out the bait for those big blue marlin in its latest arcade simulator, *Marlin Challenge*. It's a sequel to last year's *Fisherman's Belt*, which — surprisingly perhaps — wound up on top of the arcade charts during the summer of '98. Well, maybe not so surprising when you consider the sheer testosterone value of pitting your mind and muscle against those wily denizens of the deep. Player controls include the now-familiar reel-and-reel that lets you cast, then shut down the drag or play out the line as needed to hopefully land *The Big One*. In Marlin's training mode, an old salt named "The Captain" shows you the ropes. Then it's off to the deep blue as you select your favorite spot. Scenic locales include coral reefs, the coastal breakwater, a

sunken treasure ship, and other exotic waterways, as your fish finder radar-device helps you locate your prey. Then work on your reel techniques to catch the biggest blue marlin, swordfish, striped marlin, sailfish, tarpon, or whichever other colorful creatures you can hook. When a fish strikes, it's important to keep your eye on the tension gauge — too

much tension, and your line will snap! Catch enough big ones, and you'll advance to the "Bilfish Challenge," where only bilfish count. Realism? It's got everything but seasickness.



NAMCO'S "TEKKEN TAG" TOURNEYS

→ Namco America launched regional tournaments on its popular Tekken Tag Tournament game in September. Hundreds of local tournaments across the US offered players the chance to compete for prizes (T-shirts and posters). Regional tournaments began on Oct. 2, 1999, taking place at GameWorks (Schaumburg, IL); The Garage (Bellevue, WA); Southern Hills Golfand (Staten, CA); XS New York (New York, NY). The following week, southern events were held at: Dynasty's (Houston, TX); Mindbogg (Vic-Arcade (Richmond, VA); RagTime Church Street Station (Orlando, FL); and TRC (Aurora, CO). The top four regional winners are then set to "battle it out" at the National Tournament on November 6 at Namco Wonder Park in Milpitas, Calif. The next day, the World Tournament matches the best in the US against the best from Asia. For more information, check out www.tekken-tournament.com.



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the "KILL-ZONE" as seen by a
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the "KILL-ZONE" as seen by the
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11/22

Development news as it develops

WITCH HUNT

➔ Been scared by the Blair Witch? Well, you might not have to leave your living room to start sifting the woods of Berkittsville. The word is out in the chum: I think the interactive rights for *The Blair Witch Project* are on the auction block. By the time you read this, some publisher is probably already negotiating a development deal.



WAIT, IT GETS EVEN MORE EVIL

➔ While Capcom may seem to have a stranglehold on survival-horror games with the *Resident Evil* series and *Dino Crisis*, not everything undead lurks in the mind of Shinji Mikami. Next Generation has learned that THQ has a developer hand at work on a PlayStation version of the 1992 tongue-in-cheek horror flick, *The Evil Dead*, by writer-director Sam Raimi. No word on who's developing or when it's due out for release.

PLAYSTATION 2 ROADKILL

➔ In the wake of a hundred-and-one PlayStation 2 announcements coming out of Japan, an interesting US tidbit has worked its way to daylight. Electronic Arts has a tentatively-titled "Road Rash 4" for PlayStation 2 being internally developed at its Redwood Shores headquarters. No word on if it will be a US launch title, but it's likely.

FACTOR 5 GOES DOLPHIN HUNTING

➔ While it'd take vice clamps, a power saw, and the backroom of a Las Vegas casino to get Nintendo to admit it, a Next Generation source has revealed that Factor 5's unloathed Turrican sequel,



tentatively *Turrican 2*, has been signed for Project Dolphin. Will, now we know there'll be another game, said a Minko.

HAWK TALK

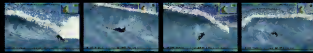
➔ No surprise that everyone's raving about how great Tony Hawk's Pro Skaterboarding is for PlayStation. So how about a sequel? Tony Hawk's Skatboarding 2 is already in the works at Newssoft for PlayStation and Nintendo 64. Newssoft has also just showed up on the official PlayStation 2 developers list, so there's a chance Tony will show up there as well.

STILL — MORE EVIL

➔ Capcom has indicated that it may have even more survival-horror projects hidden behind the doors of its Osaka office. Besides the nigh-based *Onimusha* on PlayStation 2, there is also a *House of the Dead*-type run game based on the *Resident Evil* license lurking in the wings. We're thrilled, or is it chilled?

SURF'S UP ON PLAYSTATION

➔ Queensland, Australia-based developer Krome Studios has developed a fantastic wave propagation algorithm for all things PlayStation. So you better believe the surf will be up when the developer brings its surfing title to the US. At press time, several publishers were bidding on the game.



ANGELS OUT OF LEFT FIELD

➔ Up-and-comer Angel Studios, developer of Nintendo's *Kin Grand Prix Superstar*, has got some big things in the works, according to Angel's marketing director, Kevin Williams. It's no secret Angel is developing middleware for Sony's PlayStation 2, and Williams also confirms the company is working on a top-tier Nintendo 64 project. If he ever lets us know what it is, we'll be sure to press it along.

■ LONDON CALLING

ECTS Wrap-up

Beers at the booths, but not much else as Europe gathers for E3's Annual Postscript

➔ You could count the new games unveiled at ECTS on the fingers of a sloth. Okay, so the *WarCraft 3* announcement counts as a big news event, but when you add our rampaging orc friends to the dimly lit sliver of new games shown at the European gaming community's biggest live event, it doesn't exactly amount to a thick slice of excitement pie.

The trouble with ECTS is that it just ain't E3. Nor is it the Tokyo Game Show. This is just a place where

European suits gather to see the stuff they would have seen in Los Angeles if they hadn't been too cheap to buy the trans-Atlantic fare. Actually, that's not quite true; if they'd gone to E3, they'd have seen a whole lot more.

ECTS, while undoubtedly busy and successful and useful, doesn't have quite the same gotta-be-there cachet of E3. Here's an example. The biggest story of September 1999 was the appearance of a brand-new console from Sega. The British media covering ECTS figured this out, giving

Dreamcast ample coverage. Only trouble was, Sega didn't exhibit. The machines and games on show were all courtesy of third-party exhibitors and jobbing distributors. Other notable absentees included Electronic Arts, GT Interactive, and Activision.

Nintendo's ECTS was a big friendly disappointment to be nice to a continent it had previously regarded with all the warmth of Julius Caesar glaring balefully at hood-wearing savages from his trireme. The company took a large stand in the center of Olympia, offer-

ing plenty of welcome entrance points. Howard Lincoln and Shigeru Miyamoto were available for press interviews, and the right noises were being made about commitment to Europe. The result was a booth was packed with Euro-gamers eager to try *Donkey Kong*, *Perfect Dark*, and *Jet Force Gemini*, all of which were developed not 50 miles from London.

By contrast, Sony takes a more aloof approach to the show. Visitors can only get to see the latest PlayStation creations via one portal, leading to what can best be described as a show removed from a show. This is the kind of behavior you would expect from an exceptional beauty who inflames others by being ever more distant. However, as PlayStation 2 becomes an issue, expect Sony to rediscover its role as part of the industry, as opposed to

Continued on page 25

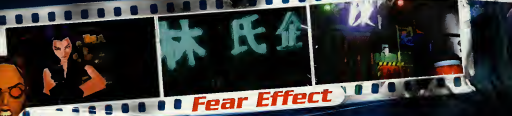
Meet the New Cast of Characters



Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver



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Continued from page 22

above the industry.

WarCraft 3 was the official Big Deal of the Show. Gathered hacks were suitably impressed by 3D visuals, a new replay strategy focus, and that famous Blizzard unit design. Other new games included two from Acclaim: *Furballs* is a wacky, colorful, zany (etc.) character-based 3D action adventure of the *Rayman* school,

while *Project Vanishing Point* is a PlayStation racing game. Apart from a few European notables such as Stormi's first-person shooter *Spinter* and Blue Byte's fourth iteration of *The Settlers* and *Battle Isle* series, new games were hard to find.

Still, it's easy for those of us who do go to E3 to dismiss this event. Fact is, the locals love it. Curiously, some of these Europeans seem to be

It's easy for those of us who go to E3 to dismiss the event, but fact is, the locals love it

under the impression that California is not the center of the universe and do not want to travel 6,000 miles every year to play a few games. This, the tenth year of ECTS, was the

biggest yet, with over 25,000 attendees and visitors from 67 different countries. It ain't the best show in the world, but it's far and away the best in Europe. —Coin Campbell

➔ To collect this issue's latest game-industry news, we've traveled from Nintendo's Spaceworld show in Japan all the way to ECTS, London's annual video-game tradeshow. But not every tradeshow exists to sell new consoles and games. If the first game you ever pre-ordered was Pac-Man for Atari 2600, then you certainly would have enjoyed the casual pace of the Classic Gaming Expo, held the weekend of August 14 at the Plaza Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

No gaggle expo hall stuffed with million-dollar booths, CGE was (and continues to be) a grass-roots effort, put together by a few individuals whose love of games harkens back to a time when Donkey Kong was actually the bad guy. Born out of last year's World of Atari show, admission for CGE was \$35 for two days, and the show, while never really crowded, reached approximately 650 attendees. Corporate sponsorship of CGE was minimal, but as the CGE program explains, the show has been a labor of love by classic gamers for classic games. This was obvious to anyone who saw the extremely impressive museum collection, met with many prominent guests (including Atari's founder Steve Cartwright and David Crane) and perused the classic games and memorabilia available to play and purchase.

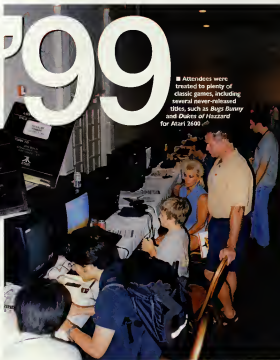
The show floor, though small, was lined with classic coin-op titles, not

■ RETRO HEAVEN

Classic Gaming Expo

A class reunion for the old school

booth babes and people wearing costumes of videogame characters. Several hardcore classic gamers were on hand to break long-standing high-score records. The contests were sponsored by Twin Galaxies Official Video Game and Pinball Book of World Records, which had set up \$1,000 bounties on many world records. One of those up to the challenge was 30-year-old Dwayne Richard of Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada, who drove his Tatartham machine across the north country and into Nevada to challenge the 17-year-old record of 244,930 points. Richard beat the record, scoring 249,980. US Tetris champion



■ Attendees were treated to plenty of classic games, including several never-released titles, such as *Bugs Bunny* and *Dukes of Hazzard* for Atari 2600.



■ Ralph Baer's "Brown Box," the prototype of the original Vectrex, and the never-released Atari Game Brain were just a few of the impressive museum pieces. Atari's Game Brain (above) was a cartridge-based system that pre-dated Atari 2600, and primarily played Pong-style games



Steve Krogman successfully defended his title against UK champ James Clewett, who flew to the US to challenge Krogman. (Clewett, a former member of Britain's national karate team, honed his Tetris skills after he was immobilized for several months due to a knee injury he sustained in competition.)

While there was plenty of side action going on with the competitions, the highlight of the show was keynote speaker Ralph Baer, who is technically the father of the home videogame. It was Baer, way back in 1958, who developed the prototype "Brown Box," a console with Pong and a lightgun, which could be attached to the TV. (Atari's first Pong game machines were stand-alone coin-op machines.) Baer's technology was licensed to Magnavox, which became the basis of the design for the first Odyssey.

Miraculously Baer's priceless "Brown Box" (remember this thing effectively launched a \$7 billion industry) still works 31 years later. Baer had the box on hand and gave the audience practically the same demonstration he gave to Magnavox three decades ago. (For more information on the remarkable Ralph Baer, visit his website at www.ralphbaer.com.)

According to organizers John Harde, Kelta Ida, and Sean Kelly, the show has been a burden to pull off, but a success nonetheless. As someone who spends too much time dealing with the business of games, this reporter found the easygoing gamer camaraderie among the classic crowd inspiring, although admittedly a bit nostalgic. If you missed it this year, don't worry, the organizers are already planning CGE 2000. More information will be available soon at www.cgeexpo.com. NextGen

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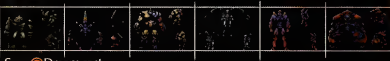
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- Utilize the VMU to store inventory and skills; and swap stuff with other players
- Deep engaging story line with real time combat
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Sega Dreamcast

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Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse © 2001 Marvel3D, Inc.

In a world of tough questions, you need a source for equally tough answers — welcome to Q&A

→ Welcome to our latest section, Q&A. You've got questions, we've got answers. To any computer and videogame question — the harder the better. The processor for the Intellivision? Sure (General Instruments CP1600). The nationality of the programmer for the original *Final Fantasy*? No problem (Iranian). The first pirated piece of consumer software? Done (Microsoft BASIC for the Altair). With a combined total of more than 100 years of gaming experience among the staff, we've amassed a store of game knowledge second to none, and if we don't know the answers, we know where to get them. So if you've got game questions, we've got answers. For this first installment, we've taken our questions from recent submissions to Next Generation Online.

■ Why did Sony use Linux as the OS for PlayStation 2? PlayStation 2 itself doesn't actually use Linux, but the PlayStation 2 development system does. According to Ken Kutaragi, SCEI boss and PlayStation creator, Linux was chosen for its stability and ease of modification.

■ Is it true that Omikron started as a text-based adventure? True. In fact, many games (especially adventure games) start as text adventures so that designers can test gameplay while art assets are being put together.

■ What's the average salary for a game programmer? They usually start around \$45,000 and go up from there.

■ Is there ever going to be a *Monkey Island 4*? Maybe. *Monkey Island 3* sold poorly, but we'd still bet that LucasArts returns to the franchise — just a hunch and a rumor for now, but some day, maybe.

■ Tommy Tallarico or the Fat Man? Tough to call. The Fat Man (who isn't fat at all) definitely has the reach and height advantage, but



All real, all the time

Soul Calibur looks awesome on Dreamcast, but settle a bet: is the opening movie pre-rendered? I say it is, my friend says it isn't.

You lose. It's rendered on the fly.

■ Rendered on the fly, the intro movie for *Soul Calibur* surpasses pre-rendered efforts on previous systems

The bottom line is this: one-on-one, fair fight, we give it to the Fat Man, but if the entourages get involved, the edge goes to Tallarico

we wouldn't put it past Tallarico to fight dirty, and he gets some hometown points from us because he's from Massachusetts. Still, the bottom line is this: one-on-one, fair fight, we give it to the Fat Man, but if the entourages get involved, the edge goes to Tallarico.

Wait — you didn't mean music-wise, did you?

■ I just moved my 2600 from the basement to the living room, but it doesn't work on my big-screen TV. What's the deal? The problem is that digital tuners can't pick up the 2600's video signal. Not surprisingly, Atari engineers used a hack to get RF output, and it simply won't work with the new digital tuners, which are optimized for picking up cable signals. Even with an RF adapter, the best you'll get is a fuzzy mess. Still, there are a couple of options. You can run the 2600 through an old, analog VCR and use that as the tuner, then run the video out from the VCR into your current setup, but the best option (if you can solder) is to modify the signal of your 2600 so that it outputs a

standard composite signal. There are instructions for this online. The one we used is found at <http://www.hvcn.org/ad329/2600vidm.html>.

■ Who designs the characters for Capcom? Is it one guy or what? Although Yoshiki Okamoto oversees all development as director of R&D, there's no single character-design guru, and the different teams create their own characters. For example, Kelji Inafune created Mega Man, while Producer Shinji Mikami came up with the characters from *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis*.

■ Why do Sony, Sega, and Nintendo do territorial lockouts? Licensing. Publishers often sell the distribution rights to different companies in different countries, so they want to minimize the number of copies of a game that get sold in a

territory it isn't licensed for (yet), to keep up the value of the license. If Activision buys the rights to *Tenchu* for the US, the company wouldn't be very happy if the Japanese *Tenchu* ran fine on US systems, especially if Activision planned to release the game at a later date, because import sales would cut into Activision's. In fact, though, current territorial lockouts are so easy to defeat it's led to many games being given worldwide, simultaneous releases.

■ What was the first company to deviate from the 9-pin controller configuration used on the 2600? Well, 2600 contemporaries like *Odyssey* and *Fairchild* didn't use it, nor did Intellivision, but the first system not to use the 9-pin plug after Atari was NES — smart, since Sega lost a patent suit to Atari over the joysticks. And PFI, you can use a Genesis controller on a 2600 (use button B).



Send questions to hardcore@next-generation.com, and be sure to check out our daily Q&A on Imagine Media's Daily Radar game site at <http://www.dailyradar.com>.



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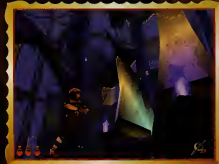
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Is it in you?



At an eagerly attended press conference in Tokyo, Sony reveals the name, price, games, and strategy for its next-generation machine



Call us naive, but for some reason, we always hoped Sony would make "Next Generation PlayStation" the permanent name of the system

Hardware specs

PlayStation2 at a glance

Release date	3/4/00 (Japan)
Launch price	¥39800 (\$390)
Dimensions	301mm (W) x 178mm (D) x 78mm (H); 2.1Kg
CPU	128-bit "Emotion Engine" @ 294.912 MHz
Memory	32 MB direct DRAM
GPU	"Graphics Synthesizer" @ 147.456 MHz
VRAM	4MB embedded on chip
Sound	SPU2, 48 hardware channels, 2MB audio RAM
Disc Drive	CD-ROM (24x), DVD-ROM (4x)
IO	PlayStation CPU+ @ 33.86 or 36.86 MHz (selectable), 2MB I/O RAM
Interfaces	Controller port (x2), memory card slot (x2), AV multi-out, optical digital out, USB port (x2), iLink (IEEE1394), PCMCIA slot (type II)



PlayStation2 ARRIVES



After months of speculation, the last of Sony's secrets about PlayStation2 were revealed to the world on September 3. Some were expected (the name, PlayStation2), some were surprising (the low launch price), and some were downright startling (the DualShock2 announcement).

While the mind-blowing specs of Sony's next-generation machine were released last March (see sidebar above, if you need a refresher), many important features were revealed only just prior to Tokyo Game Show. The most immediate revelation was the name of the machine: the pragmatic PlayStation2. A new "PS2" logo adorns the box, and creator Ken Kutaragi says he expects PS2 to become the informal term for the system.

The box itself is controversial: first impressions have been either love or hate, with very little middle ground. Designed by Sony hardware guru Mr. Goto, who also created the original PlayStation box as well as the VAIO PC, it is matte black with a post-industrial, asymmetrical design. Equipped with a sliding CD tray, it can be used

horizontally or using an optional stand, in a tower configuration. According to Goto, the design is intended to mirror the universe, the black box represents space, while the blue and purple base is a metaphor for the earth. Overall, it's slightly smaller than PS1. The standard controller will be Space Black — picture black with a bit of subtle glitter thrown in and you've got the idea. As for us, having seen it up close — the pictures Sony has provided simply do not do the unit justice — we love it. The design is consciously component-like: PS2 looks more like a VCR than it does a traditional game machine, but, especially in the tower configuration, it possesses a grace that is totally unique.

Given the planned power of PS2, many experts expected Sony to have trouble producing the chips that power the system both in quantity and at a reasonable price. While the company is almost certainly taking a loss on each unit, it has still managed to keep the launch price to ¥39800, the same launch price as PlayStation. As for quantities, the company promises that 1,000,000 machines will be available for the Japanese launch on March 4, 2000. (Those who

■ You could hear the gasps of amazement when Sony unveiled its futuristic new powerhouse for the first time... and then we saw the games

expected a more auspicious number like 3/21 or 12/3, take heart — since it is the twelfth year of the current Japanese Emperor's rule, the launch date in the Japanese calendar is 12-3-4!

In the box at launch will be two new accessories to go along with the new hardware: an 8MB memory card and the DualShock2 Controller. The memory card has 64 times the capacity of the PS1 card and transfers data at 256 times the current rate. Although Sony has already announced a "multiple gig" hard drive for the unit sometime in 2001, the new memory card (capable of holding 1/4 of the data on the 2GB 64 card) should be more than enough for most games.

More exciting is DualShock2, which features analog, pressure-sensitive buttons (except for start and select). Although button-presses on the pad feel exactly like a traditional DualShock, patented sensors in the pad provide 256 levels of velocity data with each press. The implications for gaming are immense: imagine a fighting game where different moves happen depending on how hard you hit the buttons, and you can start to understand just what types of new gameplay the controller will enable.

Discs for PS2 will be either blue or silver — blue for CD-ROMs and silver for DVD-ROMs. As expected, DVD movies are playable on the system, as are original PlayStation black discs. Although PS1 games won't look any better on PS2, Sony has just released development libraries that will enable forthcoming PS1 games to take advantage of the 24x CD drive's faster load times (the PS1 has only a 2x drive). Sony has also made it clear that all licensed PS1 peripherals should work perfectly on the new systems, from multitaps to memory cards.

Also unveiled at the event was PS Tool, the awkwardly named PS2 development hardware. Looking like a mothership version of the PS hardware, the ¥2,000,000 (\$20,000) Tool is a dual-featured system: it can work in a traditional programming/debugging mode, but also as a Linux-powered workstation that uses the PS2 hardware itself (albeit with more RAM) to create graphics.

The Online Game

Hardware was only part of Sony's announcement. The company also announced its internet and product development and marketing strategies, which make it clear that Sony is looking at PS2 as far more than just a videogame system.

Although no modem will ship with the unit, Sony plans to ship a combined Ethernet and hard-drive expansion pack in 2001 that will enable PS2 to use a cable modem to download broadband content, such as movies on demand, but beginning with "PlayStation and PlayStation2 software libraries." The company is also planning to launch an "e-distribution" server for electronic commerce, which will use Sony's new Magic Gate encryption scheme.

With only a tiny sliver of the market currently

THE PS2 JAPANESE LAUNCH TITLES

using cable modems, wouldn't gamers prefer a regular modem or DSL connection? Not according to Sony. "The thing you have to understand is that right now there is no killer app for cable modems," says Phil Harrison, vice president of third-party relations and R&D for SCEA. "What we're creating is something that can actually drive that market forward." Maybe, but we remain skeptical: Sony says cable modems will have a 10% penetration in US homes, thanks to PS2, but considering how much cable crawls today when just a few people on the same line have cable modems online, DSL seems like a smarter bet. "Cable is all we've announced so far," counters Harrison. "You'll see more announcements in the future, and don't forget, you don't necessarily need a wired connection to do this," he concludes tantalizingly. Wireless plans for PS2? Harrison won't give details, but for those already frustrated with cable, it's an encouraging sign.

What about going online right away? There may be a market there, says Harrison, but Sony isn't interested: "Our long-term strategy... is broadband."



DARK CLOUD

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

■ Create and interact with a stunning digital world in this god-game-meets-RPG. A surprise title, this really shows off PlayStation2's capabilities



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

■ An amazing update to the arcade game, this will be PS2's Soul Calibur. It's beautiful and it already plays fantastically



THE BOUNCER

Publisher: Square
Developer: Square

■ This free-roaming fighter wasn't playable, but showed off amazing lighting effects and realistic 3D graphics. The framerate was a rock-solid 60fps as well



GRAN TURISMO 2000

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

■ The PS2 update to the best-selling franchise, the hallmark of the demo version we played was slick-like control and lots of highlighting on the cars



POPOLOCROIS STORY III

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

■ What can we say: this is the game you know (or at least hope) won't make it to America — it's a hyper-cute anime title that looks like it could have been done on Super NES



ETERNAL RING

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: From Soft

■ A dungeon-crawler in a Kings Field, the demo version featured corridors and lighting effects, but no enemies, yet

It is very ambitious and it's going to take a lot of our focus going forward. We're basically leap-frogging today's Internet: when people talk about the Internet today, they mean HTML, narrowcasting, and that's basically of no interest to us. In the short term it would be very easy to plug in a modem to PS2's PCMCIA or USB interface that delivers today's Internet experience, and we'd be happy for a third party to address that opportunity." Is Sony missing

out by not having a standard browser? "Speaking personally," Harrison says, "I think looking at HTML on my TV is of no interest to me whatsoever. Why should we focus time, money, and attention [on HTML] and get distracted from the bigger goal. I'm sure there are commercial opportunities we're ignoring and missing out on, but so be it, because the end game is megabytes of data per second through broadband capabilities."

The Back Door

Sony clearly views PS2 as a back door (or perhaps even a front door) toward an ultimate goal of being the set-top box provider: It plays movies, it plays games, and it will surf the Internet and provide broadband content on demand. Sounds great, but will gamers be left out in the cold in the battle to control the living room? Will Sony's quest to be the AT&T of mass-market entertainment in the next century mean that the company will soon be eschewing *Crash 6* in favor of Checkers?

Not at all, says Harrison. "Hardcore gamers — the people who read *Next Gen* — are the people who've given us this chance to move into new areas, so we are certainly not going to leave them behind. We want to give them new creative challenges and opportunities. That's what we're about, building technology that brings wonder into people's lives."

In fact, he says, the broadband and set-top box plans aren't the end in itself, but just part of Sony's and Ken Kutaragi's larger plan to create a new kind of interactive entertainment: computer entertainment. "Ken's very altruistic about this," says Harrison. "He wants to entertain the masses. Videogames are what brought us here, and videogames are going to continue to be the central part of our strategy. Having said that, we want to start to change the definition of 'what is a videogame.' Now, obviously driving, fighting, action, shooting — all those traditional genres are going to be as significant as ever, and there are going to be amazing advances in those genres on PlayStation2, but we also see a lot of opportunities for new creators and new product coming into existence because of PS2 technology."

The Games

Don't expect videogames to morph into computer entertainment outright, however: there's still plenty of room for innovation inside traditional genres, as the first titles revealed for the system show. Although all thirteen titles announced for the Japanese launch (see details at left) look great, only *The Bouncer* (Square's free-roaming browser) and *Dark Cloud* (SCE's world-building RPG) stand out as real attempts to use the power of PlayStation2 to create a new kind of game. Harrison thinks it's unfair, though, to expect all game designers to produce genre-smashers with their first games: "For the time being, there's a commercial reality that is predominant right now perhaps over the creative reality, and that commercial reality is 'get the game done for launch.'" Even so, outside of a few exceptions (*Ridge Racer*, *Street Fighter*), the non-launch games shown at Tokyo Game Show seemed



With PS2's varied capabilities, will gamers be left out in the cold in the battle to control the living room? Not at all, say Sony execs



KESSEN

■ This feudal strategy title puts you in the role of the general, but lets you see cavalry charges with hundreds of horsemen acted out in realtime

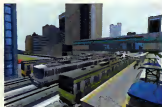
Publisher: KOE
Developer: KOE



DRUM MANIA

■ Konami's latest take on music games features, you guessed it, drums and drum-and-bass action

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami



A-TRAIN 6

■ Art Dink's trademark train sim comes to another system. It features bird's-eye and engineer views and surprisingly detailed cities

Publisher: Art Dink
Developer: Art Dink



UNISON

■ Not playable at the show, this looks to be Tecmo's entry into the rhythm-action genre, featuring a Spice Girls-style lineup

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo



DEN-SEN

■ Sliding around powerlines sound fun! You'll love this effort by Sony to expand the world of unique game concepts

Publisher: SCE
Developer: SCE



NEW RIDGE RACER

■ The latest in Namco's franchise series, *NRR* wasn't playable, but it looks amazing — much better than *G2000* at this stage

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco



STREET FIGHTER EX3

■ Super fast gameplay is this Capcom fighter's trademark, along with excellent tag-team options. Add amazing lighting effects and it's a Capcom fan's delight

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom



The PS2's design mirrors the universe: the black box represents space, while the blue and purple base is a metaphor for the Earth

a bit weak, didn't they? "We're six months away from the launch, and many of the games shown are only a few weeks into development, so don't be too quick to judge," he says.

Overall though, the planned software library — as well as the lineup of third parties — is the strongest Japanese software lineup **Next Generation** has seen, and just as PlayStation enabled the creation of totally new genres (and cross-genre games), it seems inevitable that PlayStation2 will do the same, especially with the expandable hardware features like i-Link.

Sony has never lacked vision. When Sega and

Nintendo had cart-based machines in the 16-bit days, Ken Kutaragi developed a CD-ROM based machine — the ill-fated PlayStation SNES add-on. While Sega focused on sprites for its planned 32-bit machine, Ken Kutaragi developed PSX, the first game machine that could really do 3D right. And now, with PlayStation2, Ken Kutaragi's team has revealed its most visionary and ambitious project to date, a product that may well mark one of the most impressive advances to date in the history of entertainment, interactive or otherwise. Kutaragi-san and his team have done their job and delivered an amazing machine. It's now up to software developers to see what they can make of it.

■ NEXT MONTH: Will Sony's strategy work? Can Sega survive? Does Nintendo want out of the hardware race? And what about Microsoft and X-Box? Be sure to pick up the December **Next Generation** for an in-depth report on the state of the console wars as we move into 2000.

Planned Japanese releases:	Game	Developer
1 on 1 StreetFight	3D Golf	Japan
30 Year Drive	3D Golf	Y&Y Japan
3D SF	3D Golf	Nintendo
A-Train 8	A-Train 8	Atari
Air Gun 2001	Air Gun 2001	H. Dm
Ai Wapping 2001	Ai Wapping 2001	H. Dm
AI Strip 2001	AI Strip 2001	H. Dm
American Arcade	American Arcade	Atari
American Core 2	American Core 2	From Software
Bald the Granger	Bald the Granger	Yony
Baller 2	Baller 2	Pulsar
Battle On The Grid	Battle On The Grid	Fire
BE2 1000	BE2 1000	Atari
Billie Jean King	Billie Jean King	Midway
Blind Rage	Blind Rage	Midway
Blood 2	Blood 2	Midway
Bull Fight	Bull Fight	Atari
Chow G HC	Chow G HC	Atari
Dark Cloud	Dark Cloud	Atari
Demolition	Demolition	Atari
Dragon Ball Z: The Great Mission	Dragon Ball Z: The Great Mission	From Software
Edelstein Ring	Edelstein Ring	Atari
Evil	Evil	Atari
Fantasia	Fantasia	Sony CD
Fighting Blazn.K.I. Grand Prix	Fighting Blazn.K.I. Grand Prix	Atari
Fighting GB	Fighting GB	Atari
Flower Suit and Rain	Flower Suit and Rain	Atari
Fly High	Fly High	Atari
Fx Pilot	Fx Pilot	Atari
Go Go Third	Go Go Third	Atari
Operation B & D	Operation B & D	Atari
It's Yourself's Family Out 2	It's Yourself's Family Out 2	Atari
T.S. Flame	T.S. Flame	Atari
Jack Cooper 2	Jack Cooper 2	Atari
Kawaii	Kawaii	Atari
Katakana	Katakana	Atari
Kat	Kat	Atari
Life on Earth	Life on Earth	Atari
Left's Sennora a Piel 2	Left's Sennora a Piel 2	Atari
Magic! Sports Carth Bass Club	Magic! Sports Carth Bass Club	Magical Company Limited
Magic! Sports Koshien 2000	Magic! Sports Koshien 2000	Magical Company Limited
Magic! Sports ProCatcher	Magic! Sports ProCatcher	Magical Company Limited
Mikura Taku 8	Mikura Taku 8	Atari
Multimed. Simons 2	Multimed. Simons 2	Atari
Mobile Suit Gundam	Mobile Suit Gundam	Atari
Mr. Baseball	Mr. Baseball	Atari
New Club Members	New Club Members	Atari
New Ridge Tower	New Ridge Tower	Atari
Ninja Gaiden (Japan)	Ninja Gaiden (Japan)	Atari
Olympics	Olympics	Atari
Panic Starting	Panic Starting	Atari
Parcer Century O Briston	Parcer Century O Briston	Atari
Perfect Golf 2	Perfect Golf 2	Atari
Popcorns II	Popcorns II	Atari
Pro Mountain Excite Sport	Pro Mountain Excite Sport	Atari
Roadsters: Bigley 2000	Roadsters: Bigley 2000	Atari
Roadtrip	Roadtrip	Atari
Shogun's 5	Shogun's 5	Atari
Solo-Songbook: Vocal	Solo-Songbook: Vocal	Atari
Squidator Max	Squidator Max	Atari
Sky Surfer	Sky Surfer	Atari
Solomonch 2	Solomonch 2	Atari
Sonnet	Sonnet	Atari
Soft Softing	Soft Softing	Atari
Spahn One	Spahn One	Atari
Star Ocean 2	Star Ocean 2	Atari
Street Fighter 3025	Street Fighter 3025	Atari
Street Fighters Tennis: Major 2	Street Fighters Tennis: Major 2	Atari
Suban Tag: Tournament	Suban Tag: Tournament	Atari
Silverman Manikayukon	Silverman Manikayukon	Atari
The Shogun	The Shogun	Atari
Toku Shogun: Shogun's Dayo	Toku Shogun: Shogun's Dayo	Atari
Touring Car Race Game	Touring Car Race Game	Atari
Ultima	Ultima	Atari
Wild Wild Racing	Wild Wild Racing	Atari
Word Newstead 2	Word Newstead 2	Atari
WRC	WRC	Atari
Wen	Wen	Atari
Electronic Arts Japan	Electronic Arts Japan	Atari



■ Despite what this photos imply, the PlayStation logo on the drive door can be rotated so it always faces up

Hardware specs

- Technology i-Link
- USB
- PCMCIA slot
- Memory Card 2
- DualShock2

The five coolest things about PS2 hardware

Potential Application

- Video-in to add your face or custom textures to a game
- Modems, multiple controllers
- Modem, game sharks
- SMB save space will enable massively customizable games
- Pressure-sensitive buttons could revolutionize gaming

North American Developer Lineup

The following publishers and developers have signed letters of intent to develop for PS2 in North America.

The 100 Company
7 Shulze
Activision
Activision
Activision
American Softworks (ARC)
Alm USA
Bunge
Capcom
Century Games
Cross Entertainment
Digital Asia
DravaWorks Interactive
Edice
Electronic Arts
Euro
Fun Interactive
GT Interactive
Hasbro Interactive
Homogenous Entertainment
Innovative Technologies
Informatica Entertainment
Intrepid
Konami of America
Laracore
Midway
Midway
Namco Horlos
Naughty Dog, Inc
Nerevich
Outkicks Interactions
Red Storm Entertainment
Sony Entertainment
Sony Entertainment
Sony
Sony EA
Starfront Studios
Strattek USA
Surreal Software
Take 2 Interactive
Tommycat
THQ
Trion Software
Ubisoft
Universal Interactive
Working Designs

Best of Show: The Bouncer



■ One of the best things about The Bouncer is how characters can interact with anything in the environment.



■ After hurdling the sunbites, our hero proceeds to beat up the guards and then run to hop on the train

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IT GIVES YOU A CHANCE TO FIGHT
BRAIN HUNGRY ZOMBIES

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING

APPARENTLY YOU'D BETTER WATCH YOUR BACK

New characters travel branching paths on 6 intense levels for ultimate replayability to confront over 20 kinds of mutants with hatchets, chainsaws and razor sharp teeth. Check your shorts for cash. sega.com





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Crime Cities - CyberStrike
D.O.G. - Dawn of Aces
Daytona USA - Deluxe
Dead Reckoning - De
Hunter 2 - DemonStar
Descent III - Descen
FreeSpace Great Wa
DarthKar - Die by th
Sword - Driver - Drive
Education - Ed Hunter
European Air War
Expeditable - Extreme Tr
Motorcross - F1 Racin
Simulation - F22 Total A
War - Falcon 4.0 - Field
Stream Trophy Bass 3D
Fighter Ace 1.1 - Fight
Squadron The Screami
Demons Over Europe
Final Countdown - Fig
Sim 2000 - Simulator
Fight Unlimited II - Figh
Corps Gold - Forsaken
Front Page Sports S
Racing - Front Page Spo
Trophy Bass II - Fro
Page Sports Trophy Riv
Grand Prix Legends
Grand Touring - Hea
Gear - Heavy Gear 2
Waters - H E D.
The XS Racin
bert's Gra
prou

Microsoft® SideWinder™ Force Feedback Wheel and Force Feedback Joystick bring the bone-shaking vibrations of ForceFeedback™ to PC games. Experience the kick of the afterburners as you punch through Mach 2 in Flight Simulator 2000. Wrench your nervous system as you hurtle your way through the streets of Need for Speed High Stakes. Get your hands around them. If you can.

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OPPONENTS BEFORE
THEY DO UNTO YOU.

Terrorize



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This is no time to second guess yourself.

Killer soundtrack
including music performed by

Blirk, 182, Ministry, Fear Factory, H3O,
Woodco, Glow Skulls, Jos, Lagwagon,
Ten Foot Pole, Puley, Face to Face



2 Player Split Screen Mode



5 Different Events



Exclusive Create-A-Park Feature



7 Unique Lifestyle Riders



Hundreds Of Trick Combos



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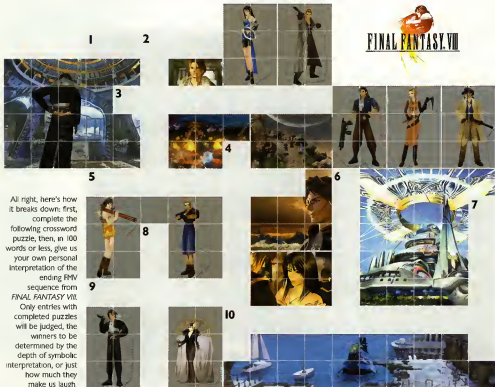
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FINAL FANTASY VIII CROSSWORD CONTEST

So you've played the game, you've even beaten the game.

Now it's time to be rewarded for your efforts...



All right, here's how it breaks down: first, complete the following crossword puzzle, then, in 100 words or less, give us your own personal interpretation of the ending FMV sequence from FINAL FANTASY VIII.

Only entries with completed puzzles will be judged, the winners to be determined by the depth of symbolic interpretation, or just how much they make us laugh.

exclusive to

Three Grand Prize Winners: A Square EA game library of six titles complete with strategy guides, plus a limited edition FFVIII poster, FFVIII T-shirt, FFVIII ball cap, and a groovy FFVIII jacket.

▶ 20 First Prize Winners: FFVIII jacket

▶ 40 Second Prize Winners: FFVIII T-shirt

▶ 75 Third Prize winners: FFVIII cap

Clues...

Across:

- Two recurring enemies: Biggs and _____.
- A fortuitous spaceship full of mutant aliens.
- The only Guardian Force with two characters.
- The most powerful spell to junction.
- Squall's Limit Break attack.

Down:

- The Guardian Force found in Cid's magic lamp.
- Squall's last name.
- Rinoa's pet dog.
- Squall has dreams in which he is this person.
- The invisible capitol city.

The judges of the contest will be Next Generation's editors, and they will be basing their decision on originality, depth of interpretation, and humor.

One entry total per individual. All entries must be received no later than December 31, 1999, with the winner being announced on or around January 31, 2000. By entering this contest you agree that Imagine Media may use your name, likeness, and words for promotional purposes without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Imagine Media is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. A list of winners may also be obtained by contacting Imagine Media, sell address: Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Final Fantasy VIII Contest, 50 North Hill Drive, Emeryville, CA 94608. This contest is limited to residents of the United States. No purchase necessary. Void in Alaska, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.



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AND YOUR DOOM AWAITS



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WILL TEMPT AND ROB YOU.



DEMONS AND DISASTER
WILL REIGN VENGEANCE UPON YOU.



YOUR FAST CARS AND EASY MONEY
WILL NOT SAVE YOU.



FOR WHEN YOU DEAL WITH THE DEVIL
THE DEVIL WILL DEAL WITH YOU.



Sega Dreamcast

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SAY YOUR PRAYERS. 11 HELLISH TRACKS AND 17 WICKED RACERS TO DRIVE AND
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 RACE LIKE A RAT OUT OF HELL. "...ONE OF THE DREAMCAST'S FIRST MUST-HAVE
 TITLES...SEXY GRAPHICS, SMOKIN' GAMEPLAY..." - GAMEPRO

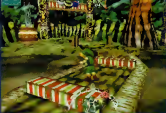


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→ Alphas

The inside track on all the hot upcoming games.

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79 ■ **Turok: Rage Wars**



86 ■ **Spawn**



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Warcraft 3	98
Wu Tang: Shaolin Style	98
Evolution	98
Deadly Pursuit	98



■ ARCADE, DREAMCAST

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

■ Publisher: **Tecmo** ■ Developer: **Tecmo** ■ Release Date: **TBD** ■ Origin: **Japan**

The fighting game to die for



We don't have to tell you that *Dead or Alive 2* is one of the most spectacular-looking games we've ever seen — the screens can speak for themselves. And believe it or not, when you see the game in motion, it's even more astounding as fighters dart around each other with catlike grace and jump around environments with motions so realistic it's eerie. Due this fall in the arcades, and next year on Dreamcast, and

Fighters dart around each other with catlike grace and move so realistically it's eerie



■ *DOA 2* walks more like *Evil*; rather raque animations, and the sequel looks to have the exact same attitude

→ Alphas

DEAD OR ALIVE!

In the past, it was customary to check to see if a person was dead by pinning a feather or mirror in front of their mouth to check for breathing, then test a finger or ear for a pulse. In modern times, the unconfirmed departed are checked for a lack of response to pain or light, inability to breathe without a machine, lack of involuntary motions, and flat brain waves.

(perhaps) PlayStation 2, DOA 2 looks to be the fighting game that sets the new high watermark in visual style, surpassing even Soul Calibur and V3TB.

While the visuals are definitely top-notch, Team Ninja is also equally concerned with how the game will play. The same control scheme has been held over from the first game, which consists of three main attack buttons: free, punch, and kick. Obviously it is the free button that differentiates the fighting style of DOA 2 from its nearest counterparts. Used properly, the free button can help your character maneuver in and out of the screen and



Each fighter has their own storyline, which plays out through the single-player game. Before each fight you will be treated to some in-game cinematics detailing why the characters are confronting each other.



Players can choose to play either the one-on-one or Team Battle modes. The Team Battle, in particular, forces players to adopt new strategies in which their two fighters work together to vanquish the opposition.

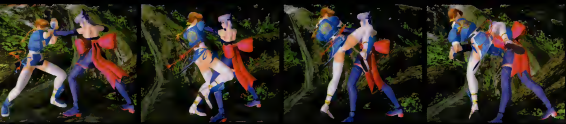
Of course, DOA 2 will have many "sexy animations" in the same style as the first game

also to easily execute reversals, which causes the flow of the battle to switch rapidly and often.

"Virtua Fighter is a defense-type game and players will alternate defense and attack position, defense, defense, and defense again," claims Tomonobu Itagaki, producer on the title. "Dead or Alive 2 is an offense, offense, offense-type of game."

People accustomed to the way fighting games are normally played will

not be accustomed to this new flow of battle, but it's easy enough to pick up. Strangely enough, once a fight gets going, it actually looks more like a martial arts battle than a traditional fighter. Adding to the feel, the characters have all been animated with a unique combination of hand animation and motion capture, which gives them a lifelike edge, but with some definite anime stylings. Of course, Itagaki admits that the game will have many "sexy animations" in the style



At 60fps, the silky smooth animation of DOA 2 is nearly indistinguishable from the latest Hong Kong martial arts flick

■ Ayane



■ Bass



■ Elio



■ Gen



■ Helena



■ Kintaro



■ Lei-Fang



■ Leon



■ Ryu



■ Tina



■ Zack



Players can easily execute reversals which cause the flow of battle to switch rapidly and often

of the first.

"Danger Zones" still loom large in the gameplay. This device, which has characters who fall into certain areas of the ring tiles getting blown back and taking considerable damage, has been changed around a bit to make the game better. "We wanted to make the game more real," says Itagaki, "so we increased

the ground effects, and we also introduced some new character gimmicks during the explosions." Even better, *DOA 2* features multi-leveled arenas so characters can be knocked off cliffs, through windows, or over a railing, only to get up on the lower level and resume fighting. There is even a new "team battle" mode where you can trade off characters in the middle of a match,

The best part about the trading of characters is that you can actually start a combo with one character and then inish with another — much like in *Tekken Tag Battle*. Of course, you can also opt to fight one-on-one if you wish.

While *DOA 2* will be hitting arcades this fall, no release date has been set for the Dreamcast (or the rumored PlayStation 2) version. While the port from Naomi to Dreamcast is a painless one, we can probably expect some enhancements (and delays) for any PlayStation 2 port (fanboys are no doubt already counting on accurate physics models for the breasts). One thing is for certain: fighting games will never be the same again. — Blake Fischer



■ Fighting in the citadel offers the added twist of stained glass windows that fighters can be thrown through. Don't worry, though, when you hit the ground below you'll still be able to get up and continue fighting.



■ Every character has a nice assortment of painful-looking throws to make your opponent wince as you shove their face into the ground.





FINAL FANTASY VIII

SQUARESOFT

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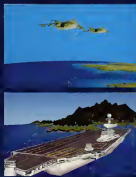
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■ With the enemy able to engage you from the air or from under the water, you'll have to be on your toes to keep the fleet safe.



■ PC

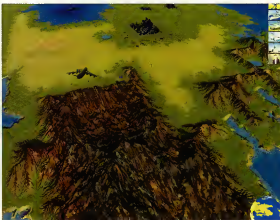
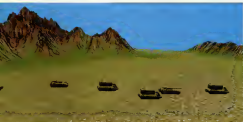
SOVEREIGN

■ Publisher: TBA ■ Developer: Verant ■ Release Date: Q4 2000 ■ Origin: US

Make your bid for planetary domination – 500 people at a time



The developers at Verant like to think big. In fact, as one of the few developers in the world devoted solely to massively multiplayer online games, they're required to. With *Sovereign*, their second effort after the highly successful *EverQuest*, the company is looking forward to bringing the realtime-strategy genre forward into a



TORTURE YOUR ENEMIES

No, this isn't the sequel to *Wild 9* — but in *Sovereign*, if you catch a spy in your city you can let him go, kill him, or subject him to torture. Torture him enough, and he will feed his original government misinformation that you supply — if he survives, that is

new age of gameplay and interaction.

The biggest difference between *Sovereign* and its nearest competitors like *Starcraft* or *C&C* is the sheer scope of the world you play in. As many as 500 players can participate in each game, and you can play on randomly generated worlds up to 4,096 times the size of the Earth. Whichever world and game size you do choose, that world is persistent on Verant's servers for as long as the game lasts (which is supposedly around one month in realtime). Once the game starts, it will keep going with or without you until the victory conditions are met.

Which makes for a tough challenge:

how will the developers level the playing field between people who play different amounts of time? One way they're doing this is by simply never letting players go. Once you leave the game and lock down your empire (which is one of many options), you are then kept in touch with what is happening in-game via email. You can actually customize your emails so that you get more frequent updates if certain conditions are met (i.e., your city is under attack). You can set the game up to page you if necessary, and there will even be an IRC-type client that you can

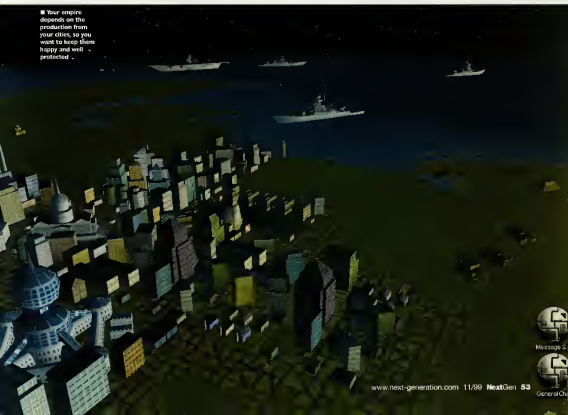


As many as 500 players can play on worlds up to 4,096 times the size of the Earth

keep running on your desktop with live chat channels with other players. This kind of thing will be very dangerous to those who have access to the Internet at work — how do you control yourself if you get an urgent call for help in the middle of the workday?

Gameplay itself is a unique combination of *Civilization*, *Command and Conquer*, and *Diplomacy*. The basic idea of the game is to build your empire so that it can eventually conquer the world. To do this, you must use diplomatic skills to deal with other

■ Your empire depends on the production from your cities, so you want to keep them happy and well protected.



→ Alphas



■ You can actually arrange for different parts of your armies to attack in waves for a more concerted strike. Even better, you can schedule your army to attack when you aren't even online!

players, resource-management skills to keep your empire running, tactical skills to deal with any military "opportunities," and a fair amount of guile so that you can manipulate and undermine people that get in your way. Everything is interrelated, so if you declare war, you can expect your citizenry to be upset (they will even send actual angry emails to your real-world account), causing your resource production to go down, which means you can't keep your army well-supplied, and so on and so forth... If it sounds complex, that's because it is — this is ambitious stuff — but Verant has done a great job so far of keeping the complexities away from the player while still offering tons of options. Much like in *EverQuest*, the interface is being designed so that people can play to their skill level.

Players will start each game off by choosing a character class to represent their persona in the game. Classes available cover a variety of themes, comprising soldier, diplomat, economist, scientist, spy, and theologian. The catch here is that no class will function as well independently as it will as part of a group. Scientists can make nuclear weapons, but only soldiers can use them. Only a diplomat can initiate martial law if

one of your cities gets out of control. The natural result of this state of affairs is a large group of uneasy alliances that must be made if players want to stay competitive. Of course, in the game's final hour, all of those alliances are sure to crack as the remaining players all try to backstab each other in the final step to victory. The spy class is perfect for this element, as they can infiltrate cities and find out valuable information or even encrypt coded messages.

The engine that Verant has created to run this game also has to be quite flexible. To keep the sense of scale, players can actually zoom in on their smallest unit and all of the way out until they have the entire world in their view (complete with any satellites that are orbiting). With air, sea, and land units all available, keeping them realistic at close range is quite a daunting task. Even the little details like the planes being pulled out of storage on a carrier are going to be in so the game will be as realistic as possible.

There is quite a bit of time before *Sovereign* even hits beta, but the crew at Verant already looks to be on track at revolutionizing the way RTSs are played. We dread the hit to productivity this game will cause.

— Blake Fischer



■ You can zoom all of the way out for a complete, world view of the action. Not shown in this shot is the cloud layer that will block visibility and the orbiting satellites.



■ Launch planes from your aircraft carrier to gather information, engage enemy fighters, or bomb a friend into the next century.

**In real life, Duke Nukem
would be forced to attend
'sensitivity training'.**



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TO GET POSERS OFF
THE MOUNTAIN.**

"I think I hear the
alarm on your S.U.V."

"Hey, there's a ton
of brie in the
base lodge."

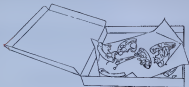
"Did you know this
mountain's out of
cell phone range?"

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Remember, the skies are for everyone. Except pigeons. They're filthy creatures.



When Gustav is a rook, share a good throw with a family. Preferably one in a mini-van.



In the heat of competition, show good etiquette. Losers never get the honey's.



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EXPLORE THE FREAK WITHIN



■ Yes, this may be a parallel dimension, but most of Link's enemies still seem to have prominent eyes or mouths just waiting to be shot. Hehmm...

■ NINTENDO 64

LEGEND OF ZELDA: GAIDEN

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Nintendo** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

A new Zelda? So soon? Will this be cool stuff, or just leftovers?



It's only been been 11 months since Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time was released, immediately shooting to the top of everyone's "Ten Best" lists and managing to sell a kajillion more N64s in the process. Despite that game's lengthy four-year development cycle, Link is already being prepped for a return — this time however, mostly without Shigeru Miyamoto.

That's right. According to sources, although Miyamoto is keeping an eye on the project, he's currently busy working on other things. Not to worry though, The game is being developed by



■ Then again, this being a parallel universe, Link does run into some pretty odd things



Link is already being prepped for a return — this time however, mostly without Shigeru Miyamoto



essentially the same team that worked with Miyamoto on *Ocarina of Time*, and knowing Miyamoto, if they weren't up to it, he wouldn't have given them his blessing (In fact, he's often downplayed his involvement with *Ocarina of Time*, claiming only to have thought up the ideas while the team implemented them).

That said, this latest game does offer a number of departures from the usual *Zelda* fare. Set some unspecified number of months after the events of *Ocarina of Time*, Gaiden begins with Link meeting a mysterious figure in the woods of Hyrule, a masked man calling himself Stalkid. Stalkid steals Link's loyal pony, Epona, and disappears, but when Link follows, he finds himself in a strange parallel dimension — a place that looks a little like Hyrule, but isn't exactly Hyrule. Worse, wherever this place is, the sky is literally falling: the moon will crash into the planet within the next few days and no one knows how to stop it.

Except, maybe, Stalkid, which makes Link's quest to track him down more than just personal.

From a technical standpoint, Gaiden actually improves on the already impressive standard set by *Ocarina of Time*. The game requires the use of a 4MB Expansion Pak, running in high-resolution mode with fairly solid framerate. Further, the textures are noticeably more detailed, and in general, every environment seems busier, with

■ Yep, that's a Deku wearing a green elf hat (above). That's because it isn't a Deku, it's Link wearing a Deku mask. Gaiden's main gameplay element lies in Link being able to put on different masks, and gaining the powers and abilities of whatever creature he disguises himself as



■ It's the theft of Link's pony, Epona, that gets things going



GAIKEN!

Besides the current *Zelda*, in past years there have also been *Zaria*, *Gradius*, and most famously *Ninja Gaiden*. So just what the heck is a "gaiden," anyway? Well, as it turns out, the literal translation is "supplementary story" or "extra story," or "a little bit of story that goes on outside the main story" but curiously, as a term, it doesn't seem to ever be applied to anything except games.

Shucks, so that probably means no fluffy the Vampire Slayer: *Gaiden* in the near future. Oh well.



→ Alphas



■ Although it would be natural to be skeptical given the game's short development time, it's clear the graphics are well up to Nintendo's usual standard

more objects, characters, and enemies than before.

Perhaps the biggest departure, however is in Gaiden's basic gameplay mechanic, which nicely hinges on the kind of magic in use in the bizarre Hyrule that Link finds himself in. Again, the place is vaguely familiar, but it operates under very different sets of rules. For example, Link comes across characters with familiar faces, like Ingo, Malon, and even Zeida, but none of them behave quite like we're used to — in fact, at least one good guy in Link's world, Navl, isn't particularly nice at all in the parallel universe.

So too, objects and weapons work very differently in this strange new world, and it turns out the upgrade path to greater abilities and powers isn't found in new weapons or tools as in every other Zelda game, but in finding and using masks. Although masks were an integral part of certain puzzles in *Ocarina of Time*, they were used exclusively as disguises. In Gaiden, when Link dons a mask, he literally becomes whatever character or creature the mask represents, morphing in a sometimes-amusing, sometimes-disturbing transformation sequence into a new creature — who still, it seems, wears

Link's trademark green hat.

Put on a Deku mask, and Link actually turns into a Deku, giving him the ability to spit seeds, walk on water, and use flower blooms to glide through the air. Slipping into a Goron mask enables him to move heavy stones and roll into a lethal spray wheel, zooming around at high speeds and devastating anything he runs over.

Although further details are sketchy at the present time, rumor has it the final game will feature as many as 20 different masks. Interestingly, each new form also enables Link to play a different instrument — the Deku plays a horn, the Goron a set of drums. Considering the many and varied uses that magic music has been put to in previous Zelda titles, we can only speculate how much deeper this may make the gameplay in Gaiden.

A 50% complete version was previewed at Nintendo's Spaceworld Expo in Tokyo in late August, wowing audiences and converting a few non-believers who looked on the comparatively short development cycle and lack of Miyamoto's direct involvement with a cynical eye. We at **Next Generation**, of course, reserve final judgment until we see the finished game, but darn if it doesn't look pretty good so far

— Jeff Lundrigan



■ As with many Zelda adventures, Gaiden includes a number of mini-games. Here, Link races for fun and profit as a Goron

Link comes across characters with familiar faces . . . but none of them behave quite like we're used to

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SONIC ADVENTURE

Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING

TOO BAD YOUR LAME-ASS REFLEXES ARE THE SAME

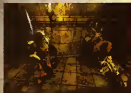
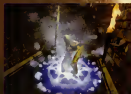
Yuzi Naka's warp speed 3D adventure through 40 expansive worlds of bonus rounds and minigames where
4 playable characters snowboard, play pinball, fly and even talk, moving 360° never felt so good. - sega.com

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- 15 levels featuring dynamic lighting and smoothly integrated indoor and outdoor locations.
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- 22 spells, each with dramatic effects.
- Play as a warrior or sorceress and take advantage of their unique abilities.

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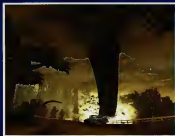




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→ Alphas

■ The forest giants are just as powerful as their Antonica-based brethren, and they're none too happy about having to share the continent with the evil Iskar.



You punch a forest_giant00 for 12 points of damage.
Entering AVATAR mode.
a forest_giant tries to crush YOU, but misses!
You punch a forest_giant for 9 points of damage.
a forest_giant tries to crush YOU, but YOU reposte!
You punch a forest_giant for 9 points of damage.
You try to punch a forest_giant, but miss!
a forest_giant crushes YOU for 97 points of damage.
a forest_giant crushes YOU for 97 points of damage.
Taking a screenshot...

■ ONLINE (PC)

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK

■ Publisher: 989 Studios ■ Developer: Verant ■ Release Date: March 2000 ■ Origin: US

Can sleepless fans cope with an even larger online world?

FREE STUFF!

If you're too much of a cheapskate to buy the expansion, there are still some new areas that are being added to the general game. On the continent of Odis, a whole city of Eudite Necromancers is being designed along with a nasty dungeon underneath. Back on Antonica, players can expect a new area in Sokusek Ro to come in an upcoming patch.



Some call it "EverSmack," to others it's "NeverRest," and while the name may vary the addition to online adventuring in EverQuest is becoming one of the greatest productivity killers in recent memory. Verant, keyed in to the ongoing success of its title, is already working on a way to make the experience even more involving with its first expansion pack, *The Ruins Of Kunark*.

The expansion is in actuality a whole new continent that is being added to the game. For a nominal upgrade fee, players will be given a CD which will grant them access to all new zones, new items, and

even a new race. Don't worry, though — even if you don't buy the expansion, you still get to see all of the new items and player characters — you just never can go

to the new areas or start as the new race.

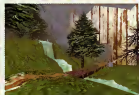
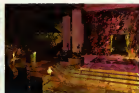
This time, the storyline revolves around a lizardlike race called the Iskar (this is the new race players can use) on



■ The new areas of Norrath feature higher polygon counts, more detailed textures, and plenty of hidden surprises for those brave enough to look

the island of Kunark. The Iksar are an elder race, like the elves, so they will have many character classes to choose from. While the list of classes isn't final yet (it needs extensive testing), they will definitely be able to play as monks — complete with new special attacks that use the tail. At one point in history the Iksar were much like the Romans in that they ruled a great portion of the world. Unfortunately for them, they were not the kindest of races; as their civilization started to decline, they were brought down by slave revolts and some very angry enemies.

Now, the island of Kunark is mostly in ruins. The Iksar have one main city left, located in the middle of the continent, which is all that remains of their once-omnigty civilization. Luckily, since the Iksar only hold down a small part of the



■ Kunark used to be the base of the Iksar's world-spanning empire, but in the last several centuries it has fallen apart. All that's left are the ruins of their once-great cities

In one forest we were treated to seeing the trees all blowing softly in the wind — then we were pounded by a 40th-level forest giant



continent, most of the areas are unexplored and unpopulated. This is great news for adventurers because that means that there are lots of new dungeons hidden in the ruined cities of the Iksar — and in those dungeons, many new monsters and magic items. All in all, there will be somewhere between 12 to 24 new zones for players to play in (Brad McQuaid, the producer of the game, confesses, "If I've learned anything, it's not to commit to hard numbers.")

Besides the new content, the technology has been upgraded

substantially as well. Players who purchase the expansion will be treated to bigger textures, a more distant horizon, and higher polygon counts. In addition to the sharper look, the environments also benefit from much more animation than in previous zones. In one forest we ran through, we were treated to the trees all softly blowing in the wind — then we were pounded by a 40th-level forest giant. Not good at all.

McQuaid stresses that EverQuest is an evolutionary game. As the game goes on, players will constantly be treated to better incarnations of the technology, better content, and even more areas to explore and conquer. There is still at least one more continent in the works, and if there is one thing players can count on, it's never sleeping again. — Blake Fischer



■ There are plenty of new high- and low-level monsters to fight like the Demi-Lich (below) or even other Iksar (bottom left). Even the monsters that have been seen before like the goblins (upper left) all have higher poly counts and much more animation





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■ The vibrant graphics won't win any fans at the Disney Lounge, but damn, these are z-fishes — what are you supposed to do, eh?



■ The ability to shoot while falling (above) may not be practical, but it sure is cool. The innovative aiming system is shown off below.



■ DREAMCAST

ZOMBIE'S REVENGE

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sega ■ Release Date: Q1 2000 ■ Origin: Japan

Resident Evil light? Third-person *House of the Dead*? Whatever you call it, it's coming to Dreamcast



The dead are restless. That's the premise of Sega's latest entry into the world of voodoo. Although it's not clear how wide the distribution of the arcade version will be in the US, the game will be coming home on Dreamcast early next year.

Gameplay will be familiar to *Diehard*

and *Resident Evil* — third-person fighting and shooting — but while that game's moves often seemed choppy, *Zombie's Revenge* features extremely smooth motion and excellent graphics, along with several nice touches like the ability to fire while falling. With keys, medical packs, and plenty of different guns and ammo to pick up, the gameplay is also deeper than the *Final Fight* style offered by *Diehard*.

The major hook? Story. It's a heavy sci-fi, conspiracy-tinged epic that features (of course) an evil corporation whose products are responsible (of course) for the zombification of your enemies. The story is revealed via

branching paths and well-done in-game cut scenes à la *The Time Crisis*.

Will the game be a straight port of the arcade experience? We asked Sega of America Producer Jason Kuo: "There are some things we want to incorporate beyond the arcade game, but I don't want to talk about them." Why not? "Soj hasn't approved them yet, and if they don't, we're going to use them in our next game, so I don't want to give anyone else our ideas." Fair enough. But even if the game is nothing but a port, the combination of action and story should be enough to ensure a bigger audience than the game has had so far in US arcades.

— Chris Chirba

HOW TO MAKE A ZOMBIE

Get yourself 1 1/2 oz dark rum, 3/4 oz Jamaica rum, 3/4 oz light rum, 3/4 oz pineapple juice, 3/4 oz papaya juice, 1 oz lime juice, and 1 teaspoon powdered sugar. Shake ingredients with ice, strain, and garnish with a pineapple wheel.

Alternately, add a near-lethal dose of pufferfish tetrotoxin, which will cause a death-like condition in your victims. After he is buried (this works best in countries that don't embalm the dead), dig him up, give him a massive dose of the hallucinogenic drug diatara atomonium, tell him you own his soul, and set him to work in the sugar cane fields, administering a small maintenance dose of toxin daily. Don't allow your zombie to taste salt.



■ Amid all the carnage (right), there are plenty of innocent victims to be saved (above), just as in *House of the Dead*





World Wrestling Federation

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■ Shortcuts are the name of the game and it takes many races before you know them all



THE INSPIRATION: OUT RUN

Released in 1986, *Out Run* changed the face of racing games by offering advanced graphics, incredible music, and the ability to choose different forks in the road to explore your world. Of course, many just remember the attractive blonde riding in the passenger seat of the Ferrari.



Creating a compelling racer is tough. "What racers need are things that involve the player," confides George Weising, producer at Player 1. "I want people to get the feel that they are controlling drivers with personalities going on adventures." So goes the concept behind the arcade racer *Roadsters*. Taking inspiration from Sega's *Out Run* and *Power Drift*, the team has been working hard to create a racer with lots of personality, high speeds, and some unique twists that will hopefully put their product ahead of the pack.

The most compelling of these twists is the idea that each track has its own scripted "adventure" to go along with the race. For example, while racing through the Panama Canal area, an earthquake will occur. While the screen is shaking



■ The smoke from the brushfires (Player 2) eventually causes the whole track to become much darker (Player 3)



■ As far as we know, this is the only game that features planes crashing into the buildings around you

■ DREAMCAST

ROADSTERS

■ Publisher: Titus ■ Developer: Player 1 ■ Release Date: December ■ Origin: US

High-speed racing meets Mother Nature

around you, the road will raise and lower in spots, bridges will collapse, and the layout of the track will change — but, of course, the race goes on. On other tracks, we witnessed a plane crashing into a building right in front of us; an avalanche; an eclipse; and a brushfire that gradually darkens the sky

with smoke so that your visibility drops throughout the race. Overall, there are a total of eight different tracks to race on, each with its own disaster to overcome.

With up to four players able to play at once, *Roadsters* may be the fix that racing fans are looking for this holiday season.

— Blake Fischer



■ Is this shot from Kansas? You'll have to pay attention to where the tornado is heading so you can take shortcuts to avoid it

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
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■ "In a four-person deathmatch," says Diensibler, "there are no bots available, if you're playing with two people, you can load in three or four bots. With only one person, you can throw in five bots. But we're still tweaking those numbers a little, based on performance."

40 

■ By completing the single-player and cooperative scenario modes with different characters, players will unlock the 17 characters available for deathmatch.

■ NINTENDO 64

TUROK RAGE WARS

■ Publisher: **Acclaim Entertainment** ■ Developer: **Acclaim Studios Austin** ■ Release Date: **November 1999** ■ Origin: **US**

Will this deathmatch-based title frag its way into the hearts of N64 players?

DINOSAUR HUNTERS TODAY...

If you want to hunt virtual dinosaurs, by all means pick up any of the Turok games. But to be a modern dinosaur hunter, you might consider becoming a paleontologist. Want to get even more hardcore? We recommend ichnology — the study of fossil tracks, trails, and footprints. It's probably more exciting than playing Deer Hunter.



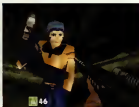
Unless you live in a cave, or refuse to follow first-person shooters, you know there's a slew of multiplayer-intensive PC titles in the works, including the highly anticipated Unreal Tournament and Quake III Arena. But this type of game isn't sticking only to PC — Turok: Rage Wars will bring home multiplayer components in place of a longer, single-player adventure.

"The entire game really is a deathmatch," says Dave Diensibler, creative director for Acclaim Studios Austin, and designer of the original Turok and Turok 2. "Our scenario mode is the single-player mode, but it can also be

played cooperatively with another player. Essentially it's deathmatch; you go from level to level trying to attain certain goals — for example, get a certain amount of

frags, get a certain number of team frags, or get them in a certain amount of time."

The bots in the scenario mode will begin as very easy to beat, with simple



■ Are you a deathmatch wizard? Rage Wars offers players 19 different categories in which to gain high rankings. Securing a number-one ranking may unlock a new item or feature.



■ Players can customize their weapon selection, and take a set of five weapons into a deathmatch

level designs, but the game will ramp up considerably training players to be highly competitive deathmatchers. The maps will become more sophisticated, with staple obstacles such as lava and new ones like a poisonous liquid that eats away not at your health, but your ammo. The bots will increase in skill and number, and players will also face four bosses with superior firepower.

Aside from the scenario mode, the game includes standard multiplayer deathmatch, team battles, frag tag, and a time trial mode. In frag tag, players can now be turned into a monkey, chicken, or compy dinosaur.

"There are also 50 awards that you can win in the game," says Dienstbier. The awards are based on various criteria, including total victories, total frags in a certain amount of time, total lifetime frags, etc. Dienstbier feels the awards, some of which will unlock hidden characters and skins, are an important way of getting players to build what he calls "career characters."

"In deathmatch, you obviously have to come to grips with dying a lot," says Dienstbier "but at the same time, we felt that it's too bad that people's characters are totally disposable to them. So we've made decisions that let people tailor characters more to their own tastes."

If over time, players can deck their characters out in new skins, win medals, and advance in rankings, they will assuredly grow more attached to them.

"If a week after we've both bought the game, and you came over to my house," Dienstbier hypothesizes, "and I have this cool futuristic Turok skin, you'll want to know how I got it. And it might be because I'm a better shot, and the skin was the result of an accuracy award."

While he's not designing levels for *Rage Wars*, Dienstbier knows from past experience that deathmatch map design



■ New weapons include the aptly named Inflator, which cartoonishly inflates your opponents, and the Chestbuster, which delivers a round loaded with an embryonic alien. After connecting with an opposing player, it incubates fairly quickly and bursts from their body to do massive damage. We love it, but still wonder where Acclaim got the idea

"Our goal is to deliver more of a Quake-style deathmatch than a GoldenEye-style deathmatch. We want a faster pace and higher frag count"

— Creative Director Dave Dienstbier



■ Inspired by Unreal, each of 16 weapons includes an alternate fire mode, essentially making two weapons in one



is a complete departure from traditional single-player maps. ("It requires very very focused design," he says — especially considering the limitations a four-player split-screen imposes.)

"When you split a screen," says Dienstbier, "you exponentially increase your overhead, both in CPU and draw time, so the levels have to become simpler in many ways."

After a recent editor's day some of the game-industry press told Dienstbier that some of the levels felt too small.

"We've expanded some of the maps," Dienstbier replies, wisely noting that game-industry journalists give some of the best feedback. "Still, our goal is to deliver more of a Quake-style deathmatch than a GoldenEye-style deathmatch. We want a faster pace and higher frag count, which is part of the reason why we've condensed the maps."

Sounds good to us. — Tom Russo



■ Rage Wars maps have been kept small so players will constantly be in harm's way. However, some levels are being expanded after recent feedback from an Editors' Day

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■ As usual, the game presents a variety of interesting and diverse baddies including dinosaur beasts and giant insects



■ PLAYSTATION

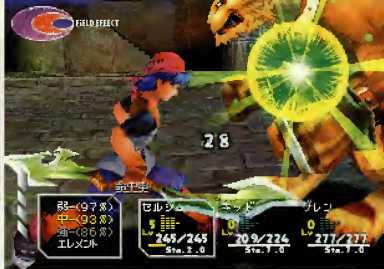
CHRONO CROSS

■ Publisher: Square ■ Developer: Square ■ Release Date: Winter 1999 ■ Origin: Japan

Just in time? No, just in between worlds...

➔ Four years ago, Square's *Chrono Trigger* quickly became an RPG fan favorite. And no wonder, with its complex plot, excellent music, likable characters, and a quirky humor that often poked fun at RPG conventions.

■ The game uses a modified version of the original *Chrono Trigger* battle system, allowing precise realtime control over each playable character



■ The incredibly rich color palette used by the new Chrono team imbues each scene with fantastic depth and the vitality of an anime cartoon



Now Square has revived the franchise with a new set of characters and a new development team. Although the original "dream team" of character designer Akira Toriyama and *Final Fantasy* guru Hironobu Sakaguchi have both moved on, the current team is none too shabby led by producer Hiromichi Tanaka and director Masato Kato (*Final Fantasy IX* and *AB*), with characters by anime artist Nobuteru Yuuki (*Record of the Lodoss War*).

The story centers on a youth named Serge and his gutsy knife-wielding female sidekick, Kid (who, naturally, favors short skirts and midriff-baring tops). They battle Yamaneko, an evil cat-human hybrid. Although story details are few at present, the game is again set in Guardia, the Tolkien-esque land of the original, but instead of traveling in time, the plot involves travels to a parallel dimension, one which mirrors the real Guardia, and anything that occurs in one dimension has direct consequences in the other.

For combat, Square has abandoned the old turn-based engine. Instead, a highly strategic setup allows players to give commands to their characters, and provides a thorough range of physical, as well as elemental (i.e., magical), attacks.

What's really impressive are the beautiful visuals. With a camera that gets much closer to the characters than most RPG fare, and some amazing light and shadow work, *Chrono Cross* could be a visual masterpiece as well as a return to gaming pleasures of old. — Nigel Edge



A RANT
Unlike almost every other RPG in which you get attacked randomly, the original *Chrono Trigger* was notable in that you could see the monsters and avoid them if you wanted to (or deliberately attack them, if you wanted to build up experience). Budding RPG designers, take note: This was a wonderful feature, making it possible to actually walk from here to there without having the game come to a grinding halt every 10 seconds for a battle. Why haven't more RPGs done that? Beats us.

■ The artists have made excellent use of light and shadow to create a variety of atmospheric settings. This inviting tavern is especially effective



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■ When several arcade cabinets are linked together, players can take on enemies as a group, or even attack each other, depending on their mood

SPAWN: THE LEGACY

Every *Spawn* game made up to this point has really sucked. Here are some quotes from an early review:

From *NG 38*
Spawn: The Eternal
on PlayStation:

"*Spawn* looks like an overly large circus freak, complete with a hunchback and a slight limp."
"...We haven't learned a damn thing in all the years of movie licensed games, from *E.T.* up to this atrocity!"
The rating: **x**

■ ARCADE

SPAWN

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Release Date: **Fall 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

A spawn of hell makes a hell of an arcade game

→ If you haven't heard of *Spawn*, you must have spent the last seven years under a rock (or maybe a tombstone). Since its May 1992 debut, this comic-book series has exploded from a cult favorite to undying (and undead) fame: it's sold more than 133 million copies worldwide, it has an animated series on HBO, and it even had a moderately successful motion picture. Unfortunately, early ventures into the gaming world have been bad for *Spawn* (including horrible PlayStation, SNES, and Game Boy games), but Capcom, with its arcade pedigree and top-notch teams in

Japan, could be the license's savior: The title character is an assassinated CIA agent who returns from hell in order to visit his still-living wife. As part of his devilish pact, *Spawn* is given unholy powers and ordered to lead hell's army on the mortal plane. Instead, he betrays his demonic "employers," defecting from the infernal legions and dedicating his supernatural abilities to battling evil.

Obviously, it's an ideal arcade concept, and Capcom has done its best to take the player into the authentic world of *Spawn* via new and classic characters, dazzling CG graphics, and a haunting, action-packed storyline. (All approved by the creator of the comic series, Todd McFarlane, no less.)

Gameplay takes place in ten levels of action in which players must progress

Players must progress from the mundane world to the evil world of "metaphysical hyper-reality"



from the mundane world of everyday, earthly reality to the hidden evil world of "metaphysical hyper-reality." Each level has Spawn (or whichever character you are playing) fighting against others in arena-type combat. In a nice twist, while you send some villains to their unearthly reward, others are recruited to Spawn's righteous cause. Spawn and his team work their way up — or down — the demonic chain of command toward a final confrontation with the dreaded Malebolgia, who must be conquered and dispatched to the Infernal regions. To increase the replay value of the game, each character will have his or her own unique ending which corresponds to the original Spawn storyline.

Capcom's *Spawn* will feature at least 11 playable characters, including some bad guys, and possibly six or seven hidden characters. Besides many of the series standbys, there are also going to be two original characters created just for the game. Each player is equipped with a wide range of diabolical weapons: guns, swords, spears, grenades, and many more (including land mines!). Some weapons can be used by any character, while others are character-specific.

Running on a Sega Naomi board, *Spawn* offers a truly 3D world of polygonal characters and settings, allowing players to change viewpoints and characters at will. Players can also move their characters in any direction and interact fully with the environment. The game mostly presents a POV directly behind the character you're playing, but it automatically cuts to a wider view during intense battle sequences.

Solo players can engage in Boss Attack Mode, taking on bosses in each stage and attempting to defeat Malebolgia in the climactic battle. An

extra challenge arrives with Team Battle Mode, where two teams of two players each struggle for sheer survival. As many as four arcade cabinets can be linked for simultaneous action, so up to four can roar into the wild Battle Royal Mode where everybody becomes everybody else's enemy! Hopefully if the title performs well in the arcades, the Dreamcast version (a predictable port) will support some of the multiplayer options over the modern. Sheer chaos! — Marcus Webb

There are plenty of weapons lying around for you to use. If you can't find one you like, you also have some "built in" weapons like Spawn's chain attack.



Overkill is one of the nasty characters from the comic series who uses cybernetic technology to take on Spawn.

Players don't necessarily have to play as Spawn; there is a large rogues' gallery to choose from. Even better, as you get further into the game, you can earn new, hidden characters to play.



■ PC

NOX

■ Publisher: Westwood ■ Developer: Westwood ■ Release Date: Winter 1999 ■ Origin: US

Is speed the key to the action RPG?

■ Nox makes incredible use of lighting and pyrotechnics to enhance the all-out action

→ On the surface, Nox looks a lot like many of the other action RPGs on the market. And it's true: Nox doesn't really innovate in graphics, but what should make the game so fascinating (and downright addictive) are the new styles of gameplay

■ Each area has its own unique adventures and battles so the single-player game will take a long time to complete

and the sheer speed at which everything moves.

The key to the game lies in the characters you can play. The character types are standard (warrior, wizard, conjurer), but their abilities aren't. Of course, the tank-like warrior excels at hand-to-hand fighting, but in addition to standard spell-casting, the wizard has the nasty ability to lay teleports and traps for people to stumble into. A combo system has been implemented so you can actually string your spells together to achieve all sorts of brutal effects. The conjurer's skill involves summoning creatures to fight for him as well as charming monsters he runs into along the way.

Single-player is fun, with a long and absorbing quest mode for each class, but the real thrill of the game is in the multiplayer. Between the plethora of tricks and traps to avoid, the chain lightning arcing through everything in its path, the hordes of creatures running around, and the heavily armed warriors fighting their way through everything,



■ Chain lightning is just one of the awesome offensive spells used by the wizard class

Nox proves its worth by providing one of the most unique and compelling deathmatch (and CTF) experiences we've played yet.

While Nox is, admittedly, not as technologically impressive as some of its newer cousins, Westwood hopes that the solid and innovative gameplay of this title will be enough to stand out with seasoned action/RPG fans.

— Blake Fischer

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→ Alphas



■ The lowering of the camera to directly behind your character dramatically changes the feel of the game from the original

■ DREAMCAST

CENTIPEDE

■ Publisher: Hasbro ■ Developer: Realsports ■ Release Date: December 1999 ■ Origin: UK

Famous arthropod makes Dreamcast its next port of call

→ Starting with (the best-forgotten) Frogger and its acquisition of most of the Atari rights, Hasbro

is moving into the world of hardcore games. Centipede on PSX and PC was the first effort with an Atari license, and now the game is coming to Dreamcast.

The game is almost a straight port of the PC version, although the textures and models have been upgraded slightly — Dreamcast is a much more powerful machine than the original target-spec PC. Given how rare shooters are today, the



■ You have free reign on the entire field of play, which means you can actually hunt the centipede at its source

WHAT ABOUT THE GRASSHOPPER?

In the original Centipede, a test of the memory revealed all the game's characters, including a mysterious grasshopper. How do you get the grasshopper to appear in the game itself? You can't. According to game god Ed Logg, creator of Centipede (as well as Asteroids, Gauntlet, and Bomb 64), the grasshopper originally was going to bounce around and eat mushrooms. When the spider was added to the game, though, the grasshopper was no longer needed, but he was left in the game's ROMs "for fun," says Logg.

3D gameplay is pretty novel — its only competition on Dreamcast at first will be the execrable Expendable — and the addition of a classic mode is a nice touch. (Real classic fans will want to wait for the full Dreamcast classic packs rumored to be coming soon).

What's really telling though, is that it is coming to Dreamcast at all: Hasbro was one of the last fence sitters on the

system, and its decision to gear up for Sega's machine leaves EA (along, of course, with Sony and Nintendo) as the only major publisher not on the system.

Hasbro doesn't go in for half-measures, either: If it's on Dreamcast, it's on Dreamcast for the long haul, which bodes well for Sega in 2000, especially if Hasbro's forthcoming titles are as much of an improvement as Centipede is on Frogger.

— Chris Chorko

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→ Alphas

■ *Strider 2* uses a unique mixture of sprite-based and 3D characters for a unique — almost retro — look.



→ It's been a weird decade for Strider Hiryu. After a flurry of activity in the late '80s and early '90s — which saw the release of his first arcade game, followed by a totally different NES adventure, and a mass of home coin-op conversions (the ST, Amiga, C64, PC engine, and Genesis were all reprints!) — his career bombed. Capcom did start work on a second Strider arcade title using proprietary M2-based technology but then M2 fell through, and now the game has arrived on a somewhat unusual PlayStation-based board. Our best guess is that this revival has been prompted by Strider

■ **ARCADE**

STRIDER 2

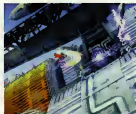
■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Capcom's ninja master slices out of retirement

Hiryu's popularity in *Maneé vs. Capcom*

Interestingly, Capcom has taken the cautious route updating this title. While *Strider* was a 2D side-scrolling platform actioner in a mold all of its own, *Strider 2* uses 3D backgrounds but combines 2D and 3D approaches to character design, retaining the original's scrolling gameplay. The new game, however, allows the player to move in any direction (rather than following a strict left-to-right route), giving a greater depth of interaction with the environments.

Other than that, it's business as usual. Hiryu must do battle with an evil collective known as the Light Sword Cyphers, through a series of atmospherically dark, manga-style environments. These locations combine gothic castles with futuristic spaceships and underground bases to create a esoteric collision of visual styles. The new 3D characters and bosses also work well, but this is essentially a faithful



■ While the look is different, the feel of *Strider 2* is exactly like the original arcade game.

THE OTHER STRIDER

While Capcom would like you to believe that *Strider 2* is the first sequel of the series, there was actually another *Strider 2* published back on Genesis. Unfortunately, the US Gold game failed to live up to even a little bit of the legacy of the first game and has been forgotten by all but the hardcore (who wish they could forget).

reproduction of old-school arcade action, replete with simple interface and snappy gameplay. While players might be unforgiving of the dated PlayStation look, the gameplay should be enough to win them over.

— Nigel Edge



■ *Strider* has all of the moves we've come to know and love — plus some new surprises.

can't block this

Blah
Blah
Blah



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Sega
Dreamcast

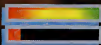
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→ Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update
on tomorrow's games



■ PLAYSTATION

SPIDERMAN



■ Spidey is webby any size. Catches crooks just like flies. Watch out, here comes a Spider-Man!

→ Games like Spiderman, Donkey Kong 64, and Excitebike 64 prove that the last generation of systems may be down, but not out, yet. On the **Next Generation** front, however, Dreamcast looks to be getting a killer RPG next year in the form of Eternal Arcadia, and US gamers are being treated to Evolution, the first RPG in the US, this November. Also, who could forget Blizzard's awesome-looking Warcraft 3?

■ NINTENDO 64

EXCITEBIKE 64



■ Nintendo's sequel to Miyamoto's classic plays more like Motocross Madness than the original game. One of the best features kept from the NES version is the easy-to-use track editor for wannabe designers



■ Spiderman integrates such Spidey standbys as swinging on your webbing (what does it attach to?) and climbing on walls. If the game plays as nice as it looks, Neversoft could have another winner

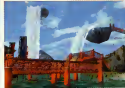
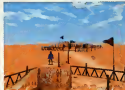




■ Originally, this site was thought to be the next in the *Phantasy Star* lineage of games because it shares much of the same design team. Instead, it is a unique RPG set in a totally original world.

■ DREAMCAST

ETERNAL ARCADIA



■ Players in *Eternal Arcadia* live on islands floating in the sky and use giant airships to explore undiscovered reaches while avoiding dangerous enemies such as the dreaded Black Sky Pirates.

■ PLAYSTATION

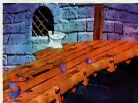
CRUSADERS OF MIGHT & MAGIC



■ PlayStation has been needing a good action/adventure/RPG for quite some time, and Crusaders looks to fit the bill perfectly. While the graphics can't compare to those of the next-generation systems, the gameplay looks to be solid and addictive.

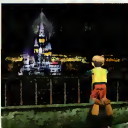
■ NINTENDO 64

DONKEY KONG 64



■ Nintendo's AAA title for the holidays continues to impress with tight gameplay and sharp graphics.

■ Ysso, the lead character in the game, is a member of the Blue Sky Pirates — a group that doesn't attack the weak and helpless but instead prefers to attack strong, heavily guarded ships. Aika, the female lead in the game, serves aboard the same ship as Ysso.



■ N64, PLAYSTATION

WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000



■ THQ's newest wrestling title boasts a modified version of the WCW Revenge engine with added animation and the most in-depth create-a-wrestler mode ever.

→ Milestones



■ PC

WARCRAFT 3

■ Blizzard's latest update to the classic series adds all-new 3D environments as well as many new RPG elements



■ DREAMCAST

EVOLUTION

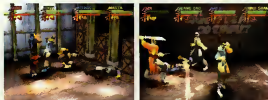


■ Randomly generated dungeons are the key to this otherwise traditional RPG, and they ensure hours of replayability. Ubi Soft has secured the American rights to this one and is preparing for a November release



■ PLAYSTATION

WU TANG: SHAOLIN STYLE



■ Four-player fighting from the team that did Thrill Kill. We expect some serious carnage

■ DREAMCAST

DEADLY PURSUIT



■ High-speed police chases are the theme of Fox's offbeat racing game

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Where the hell is game design going?

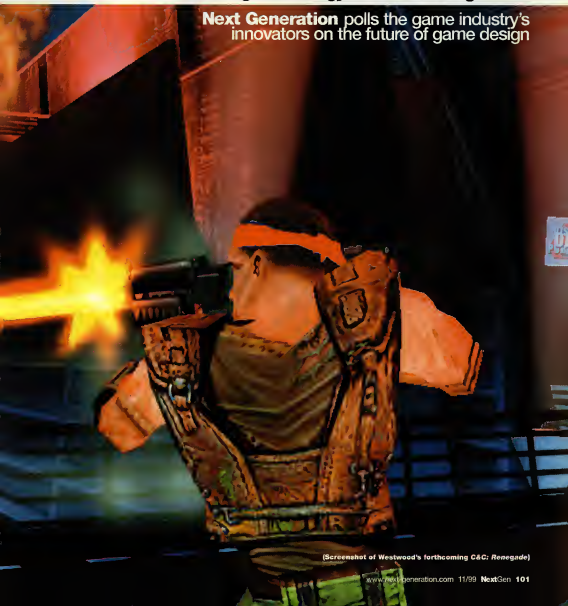
With all the realtime genre-blending, will traditional genres exist in the future?
Or is the bell tolling for...

THE DEATH OF THE GENRE?



**Will the new experiences generated by
advancing technology kill traditional genres?**

Next Generation polls the game industry's
innovators on the future of game design



(Screenshot of Westwood's forthcoming C&C: Renegade)



"The advantage of having played the C&C world," says Louis Castle, Westwood's VP of Creative Development, "is knowing the interactions of the

world and 'the rules.' For example, if you destroy a power station, then the Obelisks of Light don't work. Most of the units in the C&C world are abstractions of real-world objects, so I think knowing C&C is only a slight edge. If you are great at other shooters, the strategy elements may take you by surprise. Overall it should be an environment that rewards multiple styles of play"

C&C RENEGADE

Look around. More and more, a new game is likely to be described as an "action/adventure with RPG elements," or "realtime-strategy with an arcade component." Many games simply no longer fit into the little genre boxes we've so carefully carved and nurtured since we plugged into Pong — and that's a good thing. With continually evolving hardware for PC, and a new round of console hardware emerging this year and

next, it's time to look forward at the future of game design, to seek out new experiences, and ask: will traditional games exist in the future, or are we approaching the end of games as we know them?

Game Genres: Endangered Species?

Game genres come and go. 2D shooters were huge during the 16-bit era, but died on 32-bit platforms (in the Hunt 2, anyone!).

"The current genre segmentation will probably seem irrelevant or even antithetical to the game designs of the future"

— Gabe Newell, Valve

Likewise, the 2D platformer is also all but gone, except on Game Boy. Even the venerable adventure game is now almost dead, with only LucasArts and a few straggling indie-ware games even attempting to continue the genre commercially. But more and more, the whole concept of a single-genre game — of any genre — is starting to die.

Don't get us wrong: there are certainly "genre" games still being made, but more and more, top designers — Mikami and Miyamoto on console, Spector and Newell on PC — are straying from traditional definitions about what a game can or should be.

"I've been through hell," says Deus Ex's Warren Spector, "trying to explain what kind of game Deus Ex is — action or roleplaying. We even argue about that with the team."

As *Next Generation* pries deeper into the trend of genre-busting, we've tapped a wellspring of developers with a history of successful products that haven't followed established formulas. Because most of the recent innovation has been on PC, we talked to several prominent innovators there, starting with Gabe Newell, president of Valve Software (and, in a previous life, the man who oversaw the development of Windows at Microsoft). We asked Newell if *Half-Life* and the forthcoming *Team Fortress 2* were conscious attempts to step outside the bounds of their respective genre.

"With *Half-Life*," says Newell, "the incorporation of adventure and story elements was there from the beginning." Instead of focusing on a specific genre, Newell explains the team spent a

10 TOP Genre-busters currently available:

1. *Half-Life* (PC)
2. *Diablo* (PC)
3. *Battlezone* (PC)
4. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (N64)
5. *Uprising 2* (PC)
6. *Rainbow Six* (PC)
7. *System Shock 2* (PC)
8. *Tobal #1* (PlayStation)
9. *Guardian's Crusade* (PlayStation)
10. *Jade Cocoon* (PlayStation)



"Technology choices should be the consequence of your design objectives," Valve's Gabe Newell says, "not the driver of your design objectives. For *Team Fortress 2*, we want to push really hard

on the social and team aspects of gaming, which is leading us to incorporate technologies, like the scalable model technology, and game interfaces, like the top-down RTS view of the world for the commander"

TEAM FORTRESS 2

great deal more time thinking about the overall experience for the player. "We thought of the story and interactivity as a way to make *Half-Life* a better game," he continues, "rather than as a deliberate attempt to make a genre hybrid."

As games become more sophisticated and incorporate multiple genre elements, they become far more interesting to play. *Half-Life's* success, for instance, has shown that there can be more to first-person games than shooting. An adventure requires problem-solving skills. A shooter requires reflexes. But *Half-Life* requires problem-solving skills and reflexes, and is all the more compelling because of it. And in fact, to *Half-Life* veterans, subsequent first-person shooters like *Kingpin* have felt as though something is missing.

"We just scratched the surface of what's possible," Newell says. "From now on, we'll look back and have trouble remembering what the excitement was all about. The current genre segmentation will probably seem irrelevant or

even antithetical to the game designs of the future."

Ask Newell to look back, and he'll tell you that Warren Spector's *Ultima Underworld*, created at Origin in 1991, helped convince him that games would take over as an entertainment medium. *Underworld* was an inspiring precursor that eventually led to Newell's founding Valve. "Warren Spector is clearly thinking about an overall game experience," Newell says, "and drawing on different genre conventions in order to achieve that."

Spector, a longtime genre rule-breaker, now of Ion Storm, is responsible for *System Shock*, *Ultima Underworld*, and the forthcoming *Deus Ex*. Spector began as a pen-and-paper game designer, and lives for design. As he readily admits, "I can't write a line of code or create a single 3D object myself. Thinking about games and game systems how they work, why they don't — that's something I can do."

Does Spector think game genres are going away? Not as

such. "I think there's something innately human in the need to categorize things," says Spector, "to fit them into neat little boxes."

But, like Newell, he adamantly defends the dictum that technology must be built around the game design. "Real advances in gaming," says Spector, "are a result of creativity, not cool algorithms. Think about the games you find most memorable: did *Doom* and *Quake* succeed because John

Carmack created a cool 3D engine? Or was it the adrenaline rush of a perfectly balanced weapon/enemy equation in an environment ideally designed for the conflict?" That mandate almost dictates the kind of multi-genre games that Spector has spent his life creating.

What about console?

So where's the console genre-blending innovation? Sure it can be

10 TOP Genre-busters to watch:

1. *Dous Ex* (PC)
2. *C&G: Renegade* (PC)
3. *Diablo 2* (PC)
4. *Battlezone 2* (PC)
5. *Halo* (PC)
6. *Team Fortress 2* (PC)
7. *Good and Evil* (PC)
8. *Shenmue* (Dreamcast)
9. *Indiana Jones & the Infernal Machine* (PC, PlayStation)
10. *Zelda Gaiden* (Nintendo 64)



"I think a player will find it immensely enjoyable," says Halo's Nathan Bitner, "to destroy an enemy command-and-control center in one part of the world, and have it affect the enemy's communication abilities in a part of the world that the player won't even reach until a later stage in the game. And when I destroy a base or even an enemy, I want it to stay destroyed, unless there's a damn good reason that it was rebuilt. This is just one aspect of the open, dynamic world that we want to introduce in *Halo*. This is the future"

HALO

argued that some certainly exists. The most notable examples of late include *Zelda's* perfect blend of action and RPG, and *Metal Gear Solid VR Missions'* combination of puzzle elements and platform action. But by and large, console games lag behind PC games in genre blending. Some of it may be due to input — the simpler console pad dictates a simple interface — and perhaps simpler controls and games — but some

of it may be demographics. "It really all depends on how you define genre," says Greg Thomas, Sega's VP of Product Development. "Most 'genre-blending' games on the PC are simply adding significant depth and strategy to the games. This makes sense on the PC because the consumer is older and expects a game that challenges them intellectually more so than on console."

But not all genre-blending needs to involve intensive strategy. Does it? According to *Black Ops* President John Botti, there're other reasons more genre-blending doesn't happen on the consoles.

"It really comes down to design and budget," he explains. To change genres on consoles really requires changing gameplay mechanics and gameplay engines, he says. "It usually takes 12 to 14 months to create a title with one

core game mechanic. If you start adding more gameplay types, even if they are derivative from the core game mechanic, you ultimately are upping the demand on resources and time. It takes more people, more time, to make a game which integrates multiple gameplay types."

Botti should know: *Black Ops* has tried to pack several genres — and gameplay styles — into one game with its forthcoming *Bond*

Name Your Game

We asked each person interviewed for this feature what kind of game they'd like the fairy godmother of game development to create for them. Something for enjoyment, that they wouldn't have time to create themselves. We limited them to the consumer technology available in the next three years, but without any real creative limits. This what they asked her to conjure up.

Greg Thomas,
VP of Product Development, *Sega of America*:
"First off, I would have to look very closely at the fairy godmother's credentials in game development, but assuming she is capable, I

would have her create a social simulator RPG. Wow! A genre-blender! I think consumers would enjoy simply talking to other characters and trying to figure out what makes them tick. But that's just today's idea. Yesterday it was a remake of *Autoduel* from the Apple II, and tomorrow it could well be a magic-based action/adventure game."

Warren Spector,
Producer, *Deus Ex*, *Ion Storm*:
"Why, *Deus Ex*, of course! Seriously, though, I wouldn't ask my fairy godmother to conjure up a complete game — what would be the fun of that? I would ask her to wave her

magic wand and tell me how to make a single-player game that makes me believe I'm interacting with real people... I want to be able to create characters who respond to the questions you want to ask and react to the comments you want to make. I want a game populated by characters who respond appropriately to your actions. And I want all of that without sacrificing one iota of your immersion in the gameworld. If there's a fairy godmother who can tell me how to do all that, well, send her my way!"

John Botti,
President, *Black Ops Entertainment*:

"I think genres will always exist, but we may find other ways of drawing the lines... It all comes down to consumers. Genres exist to tell consumers what type of product they are looking at and if they are generally interested in the experience" — Louis Castle, Westwood

title for PlayStation, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Instead of blending several genres into one core gameplay element, *Black Ops* has taken the several-games-in-one approach. "We're shipping with exterior and interior third-person modes, skiing and driving," Botti says. "The skiing and driving sequences definitely add variety to on-foot action."

Still, Botti recognizes that not every team can pull this off. "Most publishers will not pony up the five million dollars required to have the resources on staff to do it right," he says, "especially if you're trying to focus on one sku. We had the opportunity to develop and explore multi-genre blending

with *Bond*, because it's *Bond*. If we did an original title with multiple gameplay types that took this long, it would have been dead and buried long ago."

Given the PlayStation's level of technology, this may be the case. But with Dreamcast, Dolphin, PlayStation 2, and perhaps Microsoft's "X-Box," there may be more potential for designers to innovate, partly because these systems will first appeal to more sophisticated gamers.

"This is one of the reasons why we put a modem in the Dreamcast," says Thomas. "And in the future you will see the Dreamcast modem put to use in some genre-blending online

gaming experiences."

With or without a modem, Botti also believes there will be more genre-blending on the new consoles. He feels the new hardware will bring with it new, multi-engine opportunities in game design.

"Imagine playing your own character in a highly-detailed world," says Botti, "where you're being chased down a street by a heavily-armed gang, and you must decide: Should I stay and get in a gunfight with my nife? Should I commandeer that guy's Harley across the street? Or should I head for the helicopter on the roof of the bank?"

Botti's hypothetical situation is an exciting one, and the potential for games that feature that level of complexity may be one reason PC developer Westwood is getting into the console race. "Westwood is working on next-generation titles," reveals Louis Castle, Westwood's vice president of Creative Development. "We

haven't announced any titles yet, but we're certainly working very closely with the hardware manufacturers to deliver titles designed for specifically for the new machines."

But players won't need to wait until the new consoles are launched to see Westwood's next genre-bending creation. *Command and Conquer: Renegade*, a 3D action game set in the C&C universe, is scheduled for release this year for the PC. "Renegade is all about action," says Castle. "If you are great at other shooters, the strategy elements may take you by surprise. Overall it should be an environment that rewards multiple styles of play."

Another action title that has gamers everywhere curious is Bungie's *Halo*. While it, too, will primarily look like an action game, Producer Nathan Bitner explains that it will be much more than that. "We are always trying to expand upon the more typical genres," Bitner says, citing his past work on *Myth* and *Myth II*. "Halo will certainly draw on unconventional elements from other genres and have a story as compelling as any role-playing game. You won't be flipping switches or finding ammo in ancient pottery. The decisions players will make will be of a different order: Do you attack the tank and its crew or the communication station helping it operate? The choices you make will be strategic and tactical, and



■ Developer *Black Ops* has implemented several gameplay styles in *Tomorrow Never Dies* for PlayStation, including skiing and driving sequences



"I'd ask for the ultimate action/adventure game. A highly detailed world that blends cinematic storytelling, epic adventure, and addictive arcade play, including fighting, racing, and flying. It would also include an Internet component, to be a completely varied, persistent world that millions of people could play in."

Gabe Newell,
President, Valve

"I can't wait to see what Shigeru Miyamoto does with the *Dolphin* and the *Mario* franchise, but I think there's a game out there that I think of as the "I'm a tiny person in a

giant tree" game. What enables this design is the huge advances in polygon and fill-rate capabilities along with much better scalable rendering. Rather than being in a world that is very closed and claustrophobic, like the traditional shooter, you can go beyond the expansiveness of, say, a flight simulator; and have this really open, fractally complex space where you are always oriented within the world on a global level, but are discovering lots of cool local complexity. Think of it as a fairy having an adventure in a giant tree, where you see all of these branches way off in the distance, and you can travel there to find a colony of other fairies there who might

teach you how to fly through this 3D maze. Or you could think of it as *Ringworld* with twisty bits. The thing is, with the new hardware that's coming out, we can build that kind of world and we never could before. That kind of world seems like a natural basis for adventuring experiences."

Louis Castle,

VP of Creative Development, Westwood:

"Whatever Miyamoto is working on, I would love to have it three years early! I expect that will be a game I play with my kids for hundreds of hours. He is the Godfather of game development."



"I can tell you I've been through hell," says *Deus Ex* Producer Warren Spector, "trying to explain to people just what kind of game *System Shock* was and what kind of game *Deus Ex* is going to be — are they action games or roleplaying games? We even argue about that within the *Deus Ex* team"

DEUS EX

each one will be exciting in and of itself"

Indeed, with the assistance of new technology, the scope of the game worlds developers are creating has grown considerably. Developers and publishers who intend to keep up will be needing to think three steps ahead.

"I feel," Bitner says, "that the industry is beginning to notice that many gamers appreciate having the best elements of several genres blended into one game." Still, Thomas doesn't think genre-blending is the only way toward innovation: "I believe there are lots of different ways to be creative and develop 'original' games, and genre-blending is only one. Traditional genres will always exist as long as game players enjoy playing them."

Moving Into The Future

If genre-blending is so compelling, why haven't we seen more of it, then? Botti says it's money, but Spector points to a deeper cause: "The biggest thing I see holding designers back is the lack of a common vocabulary for discussing game design."

Spector's right. He notes that in the technology arena, programmers share a common programming language. What's more, research on AI, physics, and 3D rendering is well documented and spans hundreds of man-years.

"They all rely upon terms with agreed-upon meanings," Spector says. "Think there's any agreement on what 'immersion' means or consensus on the significance of emergent behavior? Forget about it. Designers need to stop thinking of game design as a mysterious art

"I feel that the industry is beginning to notice that many gamers appreciate having the best elements of several genres blended into one game" — Nathan Blinn, Bungie

that can't be discussed intelligently. They — we — need to begin applying the same rigor programmers and scientists (and even literary critics) have been applying to their fields for decades. When that happens, then you'll start to see some real design advances."

But when it comes to establishing a game that breaks traditional boundaries, taking a conservative approach to the creative process is something most publishers are very familiar with, and even Westwood is cautious when it comes to working with abstract designs.

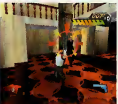
"We temper our creativity with what has worked in the past," says Castle, "and try to sprinkle in new ideas within a familiar framework. This is very difficult, but not because it is hard to come up with new ideas. The difficulty is in holding back and not pushing the product so far out that the consumer feels lost or confused."

Consumer confusion goes a

long way toward explaining why genres may evolve and blend, but may never die out entirely. "I'm sure traditional genres will die out as they evolve," he continues, "but I think genres will always exist — although we may find other ways of drawing the lines." Why? Because, quite simply, "genres exist to tell consumers what type of product they are looking at," he says, "and if they are generally interested in the experience."

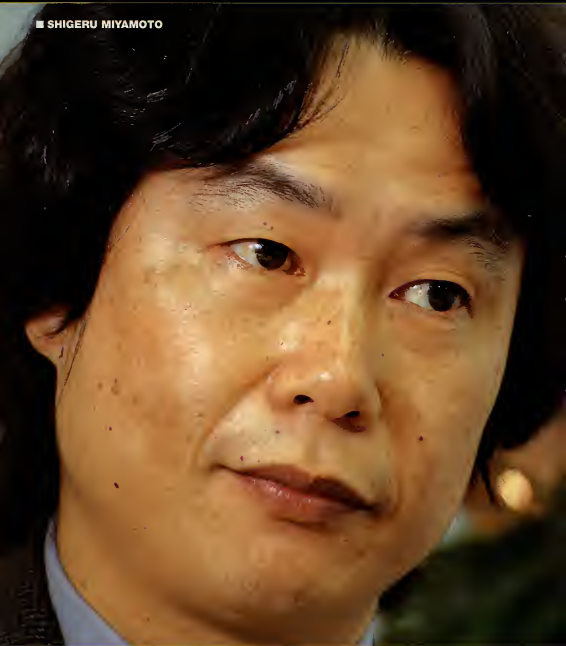
But while genres may continue to exist in product descriptions on boxes and in magazines, the final word goes to Newell, who points out why genres belong on boxes, not design docs.

"Plot and character development and physics and great rendering are the tools for building the future generation of games," he says. "Action and RPG and adventure are ways of describing games from the past. The existing genre distinctions don't help designers come up with better games." **NextGen**



■ While *Bond* includes skiing and driving, the core gameplay is the on-foot action. Balancing all of these elements has added more than a year to the game's schedule

■ SHIGERU MIYAMOTO



What's up with this crazy new system anyhow?



Dreamcast is out, and Sony has just revealed PlayStation 2. What about Nintendo? Aside from some impressive technology announcements, the company has been largely silent about its next-generation plans. So we sent Steve Kent to Nintendo's Kyoto HQ to get the latest details from Shigeru Miyamoto. Also sitting in on the meeting was Nintendo's number-two executive, Hiroshi Imanishi. What's up with Dolphin? Can Nintendo ever retake the number-one position in Japan? Who'll fill Mr. Yamauchi's shoes when he retires? Read on.

Dolphin Kong

Next Generation: First off, is Dolphin still the name of the project?

Shigeru Miyamoto: Yes, I am of the opinion that Dolphin can be the actual official name of the product, but some people disagree with me.

NG: What's the status of development right now? What do you think of the machine's progress?

SM: Right now, the hardware development team is asking if we, the software creators, have any extra desires to add into the hardware design. But I know that these people are the same who developed the N64. They have already learned quite a lot about what to do with 3D graphics generation and so forth, and they are full of new ideas. So rather than thinking about what we want the new machine to do, I'm concentrated more on thinking about what we should do with the new hardware.

NG: What do you mean?

SM: Like whether we should devote our energies into using the full capacity of the machine or whether we should say, "We've got a new machine with so much power, so rather than making every possible effort to take advantage of everything that's there, maybe we should concentrate on using just part of the power, but using it very effectively." This would let us spend less money and time and effort and still come up with better solutions and effects in comparison to what we are doing with N64.

NG: A very big rumor right now is that Dolphin

will retail for \$99. True?

Hiroshi Imanishi: The only place I have heard that is in *Next Generation!* In the interview article with Howard Lincoln, he just said it would be very aggressively priced. *Next Generation* was the one who speculated that it would be possible to do it at \$99.

SM: Maybe if we leave out the DVD drive, then we can make it \$99!

NG: Does a completed chipset exist yet?

HI: The basic design has already been made, but it's going to be next year before we are going to be complete. We're integrating a lot of functions onto just a few chips.

NG: Is there any possibility that you will make a year 2000 launch?

HI: Yes, but I think whether or not we can meet the 2000 deadline depends on what kind of games materialize.

The Games

NG: Has work begun on games yet?

SM: Yes, I am personally involved in a variety of projects.

NG: Anything you can tell us about?

SM: What I'm doing right now is making the foundations and environments for the development of several different projects. I understand that some users are already anticipating the next-generation system to be more gorgeous in terms of graphics and so forth, but I think that is only part of it. Rather, I think we should pay more attention to the very simple concept of how the new system should be played and what kind of play-rules are going to apply. Unfortunately, these are ideas that can be easily duplicated by others once they're revealed, so I'm not in position to say anything right now.

NG: You've said that when you created *Mario 64*, you created it the way people might create a theme park; that first you made, say, a snowy mountain, then you looked for activities players could do on it. Is that the kind of thing you're doing on Dolphin now?

SM: Yes, it's a kind of very consistent theme I always have, regardless of the advancement of

the hardware technology I like to seek for a particular theme. Of course, in order to realize it, to duplicate a part of nature, say, the machine needs a lot of power, and Dolphin is going to have a lot of power, so I think we can make something closer to my original concept. At the same time, because it's going to have the very powerful CPU, I'm paying attention to the possibility of exploring new aspects of usage. So, not just greater realizations of my original visions, but new visions of the CPU for other things.

NG: Sega is saying that the next evolution of games will be multiplayer, network games. Sony is kind of saying that the next change will be "emotion" in games. Where does Nintendo see the next step in games?

SM: I think the idea itself is going to be the next trend. They can talk about networks, but we all know about that, so what's new about it? It's not interesting. What's interesting is doing something which nobody is thinking about. That's why the work we do at Nintendo is so enjoyable. Without ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next-generation of hardware. And if I had some new idea, I may say tomorrow that we don't need Dolphin.

NG: Namco's *Soul Calibur* is, right now, probably the best-looking game ever made, and it's also turned out to be one of the best fighting games ever made. Do more polygons make a better game?

SM: Take a racing game, for example. If we make better background scenery, we the developers are very glad. So yes, we can make it better by adding the polygons. On the other hand, for the creators and for the game player, once they have seen enough of the more beautiful scenery, they get accustomed to it and see nothing very important about it. What's more important is what kind of information the players should get from those data. That's all. In making the games for N64, of course, we are trying to make better-looking games, but by doing so, we encounter a lot of technological hurdles. In fact, we are getting over them, but for the next-generation game machine we don't have to worry about a lot of hurdles. So I think it's going to be more easily done, I mean,

Still swimming with the Dolphin?

The idea itself is going to be the next trend. Without ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next generation of hardware

better graphics in games can be easily done on the Dolphin.

Nintendo's Japanese plans

NG: Why didn't N64 do better in Japan?
SM: Yeah, I think there's got to be a lot of elements, including my way of doing many things and the way the salespeople have advertised the product in Japan. Mr. Yamauchi, for example, pointed out the fact that we missed two Christmas seasons against our competitors, and in my opinion we didn't have a good roleplaying game from the very beginning. In Japan, RPGs are a very big market, like maybe half of the total market. And we were late in introducing *Zelda* and late introducing other games. Also, at the time of the launch, 3D fighting games were very big, and we didn't have one. I don't know if those kind of trends were good for the Japanese market in general or not, but it is true that they were booming and Nintendo was against that kind of boom and tried to make its own boom.

NG: Can Nintendo have a 90% share of the market again ever? Will Dolphin do it?

Hi: We are not concerned about recapturing the share for its own sake. What Mr. Miyamoto pointed out is we should be more interested in

and make efforts to seek out new worlds that nobody is aware of right now. Then taking more share is inevitable, since we are creating a new market. If we are just concerned about recapturing the share of the old market, we are just destined to repeat the failure of Sega. Mr. Yamauchi sometimes says, "Where does Sega look?" Sega is always looking at Nintendo, and Sega was just trying to capture the market share Nintendo already had. Mr. Yamauchi is always saying that if we are going to make a product, that product must have some meaning to its existence and that we are not making products to compete with some existing other things. Of course, when he sees other products are selling, we really want something that can sell like that product — I think that's the natural thought to have — but he's always saying that we have to have something with its own reason to exist.

When it comes to the N64 itself, I don't think it was a mistake to go ahead with cartridges, but the fact is PlayStation had a CD-ROM, and for many of the game developers the risk was less and the result was that we have to admit the variety of software was less than anticipated for N64. Well, when we introduce the Dolphin system, it's going to be DVD, and it's going to be a level playing field. The developers will have to carefully observe which system is more suited for development.

NG: Will Square come back?

Hi: It's up to them, but maybe Square has been given so much preferred treatment by Sony that they won't feel like working for others.

SM: It's not which company is there, but which products. Nintendo is currently intensifying its development line.

The Next Yamauchi

NG: Hiroshi Yamauchi built Nintendo from a small card company into one of the world's leading entertainment companies, and he's been instrumental in running Nintendo on a day-to-day basis. Lately he's been talking about retirement. Will Mr. Yamauchi retire in the year 2000, or does he plan to go on?

Hi: He is always saying that he cannot work until he dies and he needs some specific timing for the retirement, but he hasn't stated any specific date. A newspaper article suggested that it should be in 2000.

NG: But that's wasn't his idea?

Hi: Not his idea.

NG: When he leaves, who will replace him? You? Mr. Arakawa?



Hi: You know, I'm a kind of an assistant for Mr. Yamauchi, and Mr. Yamauchi doesn't speak about his successor at all, but common sense is it should be Mr. Arakawa.

NG: There have been several stories where Mr. Yamauchi has expressed dissatisfaction with Mr. Arakawa's work, although he seems to be doing a very good job with Nintendo 64.

Hi: You know we all agree that Mr. Arakawa is the person who has built Nintendo of America to its current position — with great partners, of course. Surrounding himself with great people has been one of his greatest strengths. So, as for the criticism, I believe that being critical is kind of a very Japanese, and very Yamauchi-like approach. In other words, Mr. Yamauchi is expecting quite an awful lot from Mr. Arakawa.

Rumor Quashing

NG: While we have you here, can we just clear some things up for the record?

SM: Of course.

NG: Everyone knows about your creation of *Donkey Kong*, *Mario*, and *Zelda*, but what about *Metroid*? What did you have to do with the creation of *Metroid*?

SM: On *Metroid* I had no involvement at all. Zero.

NG: That was Mr. Yokoi?

SM: Yes, some young people working for Mr. Yokoi.

NG: What about *Donkey Kong*? There's a persistent rumor in America that it was originally called *Monkey Kong*.

SM: No, we didn't have that kind of idea. I just thought the donkey was the animal, and donkey was considered to be very silly. **NextGen**



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→ Finals

Some days it does pay to come to work — take a gander at some of the best-looking games ever to hit their respective platforms. Ah, the holidays will be good to us this year

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■ If you think she still looks good, wait until you see the game in motion!



■ Positioning is the key to successful fighting. Kiba will be in bad shape if he ever lets Antares close in with that ax



■ Dreamcast

Soul Calibur



For a company that has never entered the consumer hardware

business, Namco sure knows how to sell a system. Its PlayStation lineup (Tekken series, Ridge Racer series) has consistently dominated with some of the most technologically advanced and playable games on the system. Now, with Soul Calibur on Dreamcast, the wizards at Namco prove they're still in top form by creating one of the most beautiful and playable fighting games ever.



■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco**

Namco delivers on Dreamcast

This is Namco's second attempt at a 3D weapons-based fighter. The prequel, *Soul Blade*, which came out in the arcade and on PlayStation, was lauded for having incredible graphics,

but many felt that its gameplay was a little shallow. The main complaint was that the combo system required rote memorization of button strings and didn't allow for much variety in

The graphics are, simply put, the best we've ever seen in any home or arcade game to date



■ There are lots of hidden characters and arenas to find, and you'll have to spend hours unlocking every last secret in the game

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The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at Next Generation will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**

★★★★☆ **Excellent**

★★★☆☆ **Good**

★★☆☆☆ **Fair**

★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

the gameplay (much like *Killer Instinct*).

With *Soul Calibur*, the team has taken this criticism to heart and added far more moves than in the original game. Along with all of these new moves comes a new way of linking them together which allows improvisation and free-form combo-making. The result is a much more fluid fighting engine, which is closer to *Tekken* than to the first game.

Adding to the overall chaos of a good weapon fight is the ability to move in and out of the screen in 3D. Positioning is extremely important and you'll spend hours trying to master the spacing needs of each character's strikes. Odds are, in fact, that without some serious devotion to the game, you won't be

able to master even half of the ten initially selectable characters (not to mention the many secret ones) because of the differences in gameplay style. Killer-players must learn to move around quickly and keep opponents at long range with his staff, while the brave few who try Astaroth must learn how to get the most out of his slow (yet extremely powerful) moves. The sheer variety and complexity of the fighters, combined with a great sense of overall balance, make this Namco's strongest fighting engine yet.

Of course, the main thing that will have people clamoring for this title are the graphics, which are, simply put, the best we've ever seen in any home or arcade game to date. Period. Characters are



■ There are plenty of moves, counters, and throws to satisfy any fighting fan

exquisitely detailed down to their hair blowing in the wind or the mist of breath on a cold winter's day. Their animations are equally impressive and casual passersby usually get instantly drawn in at first sight. No fighting game has ever looked or moved like this, and even Sega's great *VF3* falls below this new benchmark.

Complementing the visuals is a spectacular orchestral soundtrack that urges players on in their battle to beat each other to a pulp.

The icing on the cake is the sheer amount of secrets that Namco has included in the game. There are secret arenas, secret costumes, secret characters, secret modes, and over 300 pieces of artwork to find. Even for the single-player game, there's an

excellent story mode which has you lead your character on a quest to find the mysterious Soul Edge sword. Along the way you must complete many challenges which vary in both style and difficulty.

Put everything together and you have the most compelling reason there has ever been to buy a new system. Hats off to Namco for showing the world what Dreamcast is capable of. Let's just hope that other developers can live up to this legacy.

— Blake Fischer
Bottom Line: Beautiful, deep, and far more compelling than any 3D fighter in recent memory, *Soul Calibur* is reason enough to own a Dreamcast.

► NextGen ★★★★★

STREET FIGHTER II

The first and only fighting game that has really moved a significant amount of systems is *Street Fighter II* for SNES. Strangely, though, less than two years later, it was *Super Street Fighter II* on SINES which nearly bankrupted Capcom with its horrible sales numbers and high production run.



■ The ability to move in 3D easily (much more so than *Tekken*) adds a whole new layer of strategy to this already deep fighting game



NFL Blitz 2000

Platform: Dreamcast Publisher: Midway Developer: Midway



Blitz 2000 is arcade perfect, and adds a new icon passing mode — that doesn't make it perfect, though

The beauty of Dreamcast's NFL 2K lies in the subtleties, and, while NFL Blitz might not be everything you want in a football game, it is anything but subtle. This first Blitz for Dreamcast is a comprehensive port with arcade-perfect graphics and sound, yet somehow the big hits and puke-pounding action of arcade experience are diminished on the home console. The game's controls don't transition well to the Dreamcast controller, and if you use

the analog stick, you'll miss plenty of tackles getting used to it.

To add longevity to the arcade version, there's an added one-player season mode with an extra page of offensive plays and some new defensive ones, as well as helpful icon passing. While the added offensive plays help, occasionally special team plays, like the field goal, replace the play selections you'd have rather called, like the bomb or Hal Mary The

new defenses aren't very well designed, and the game tends to fumble in season mode. Still, as a two-player game, Blitz holds up pretty well, and there's nothing more rewarding than completing the perfect last-minute fourth-down conversion. — Tom Russo
Bottom Line: As fast and fun as it ever was, but lacking the depth and one-player replayability of Sega's own NFL 2K.

NextGen ★★★★★

King of Fighters Dream Match '99

Platform: Dreamcast Publisher: SNK Developer: SNK



Playing King of Fighters on Dreamcast is like riding a moped — it's kinda fun, but you'll feel stupid if your friends catch you doing it

When compared to *Power Stone* or *Soul Calibur*, *King of Fighters Dream Match '99* looks like it belongs on a "classic collection" disc, and in many ways, it does. This 2D fighting series is as old as *Street Fighter*, although not quite as well put together. While *King of Fighters* spawned the team-battle premise, it has essentially failed to grow anything but its roster, which is, in a word, massive; there are 38 fighters, not counting hidden ones. Players

can select from this huge list to form teams of three for team battles, or select one character for traditional tournament play. Of course, with this many characters, there's nice variety, but a lot of them are too similar, and they do sort of run together in your head.

And frankly, the game is an insult to Dreamcast's technology: The backgrounds are barely 3D, the 2D character animation is lacking, nor is the control all it could be. (We

recommend the fighting stick.) And, ugh, there's even some loading time. Despite all this, the series does retain the core gameplay and upbeat atmosphere that made it so likable on the NeoGeo, but it still fails to match. — Tom Russo
Bottom Line: Not bad, but with so many other high-quality fighters available, this one only makes sense for players nostalgic for old NeoGeo fighting games.

NextGen ★★★★★

Dreamcast

Blue Stinger

Publisher: Activision Developer: Climax Graphics/Activision

Things that go boom meet a lot of loose lips

→ There are a lot of fairly interesting things about this third-person action/adventure. There are also a lot of things that are really annoying — not as bad as the original Japanese



Henri's a trouble: the employee code for the Sega arcade is "1234" or "13-24." You're supposed to know this because this little girl mentions "Christmas Eve" — how's that for a thin clue?

version, but annoying all the same.

As with last year's *Terichu*, Activision took some time to tweak this for its domestic release, and the effort is appreciated. The awful camera view of the original has been jettisoned in favor of a *Tomb Raider*-style, "follow you around" view. It still gets confusing in the game's many tight spaces, but it's no worse than usual.

The real trouble here is that some attention should have been given to the rest of the game's shortcomings. The dialogue is completely banal, and the lip syncing is laughable: characters sit there moving their mouths while no sound comes out. This makes the otherwise competent voice



The effects are impressive eye candy, but it does make you wonder if it will seem so flashy in another year or so

acting seem stilted, with long, inappropriate silences. It isn't helped along by the vaguely creative "find this object and open this area" adventure mechanics and sometimes very thin clues either.

Still, the graphics are pretty and the weapons make some pretty big explosions. The design may not be inspired, but it's still odd

compulsive in the way adventures tend to be. — Jeff Lundrigan

Bottom Line: Even the lowest-budgeted kung fu chespie you can think of had better dubbing, but if you like an adventure with big explosions, this ain't too bad.

NextGen ★★★★★

■ Dreamcast

Ready 2 Rumble

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Midway

The king of arcade sports gets another jewel in its crown



■ The characters are so well done, they're kind of creepy, especially when their eyes bug out

→ Ready 2 Rumble has a lot of heritage to live up to: namely, *Bizt* and *NBA Jam*. Does it? In spades. Starting with Michael Buffort's trademarked phrase, the game kicks into the most fun arcade boxing game since *PunchOut!*

This is the game that really started getting people in the US excited about Dreamcast, and for good reason. It looks great, with over-the-top, stereotypical (and slightly disturbing) cartoon characters like Boris Knockimov or Big Willy Johnson, and it plays great too, with fast and furious rock-'em-sock-'em action. Score six good hits and you can

activate a R-U-M-B-L-E power-up. Rounding out the action are taunts and special moves that are unique to each character from Butcher Brown's head butt to Jet Chin's kung-fu.

The Championship mode lets you run a gym and a stable of boxers whom you train via well done mini-games and club matches as you get ready to take your shot at the title — watching the crowd get bigger as you move closer and closer to the title is a very nice touch — but the real action is in the *Versus* mode.

Unfortunately, while the



■ Characters' faces take damage during the fight, which can make for some gruesome victory poses

Monaco GP

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Developer: Ubi Soft



■ A bit bland, but if you're willing to wade through the bad interface, there's some deep racing here

While this game has all the options serious Grand Prix fans will want, you might have a hard time finding them: Ubi has used the high-res mode of Dreamcast to pack a ton of information on every screen, and unfortunately the interface is among the worst we've seen on a console game. Count on being confused.

Once you get to racing, things are better. Although tracks are pretty sparse, the racing model is exacting — too exacting for some, probably. Even in arcade mode, count on your car spinning out a lot. While that's par for the course for serious sims, we expect arcade modes to be a little more forgiving. Still, the effects are impressive, particularly the way your tires pick up bits of whatever surface you're going over.

Overall though, the lack of the actual F1 license, the too-difficult arcade mode, and the confusing interface keep this squarely in the middle of the pack. — Chris Choloro

Bottom Line: If you've got a Dreamcast and want GP racing, this isn't bad, but we'd much rather play Ubi's *Speed Devils* instead.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

TrickStyle

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Criterion



■ TrickStyle's complicated tracks can only be described as "brutal"

Oh, what a disappointment this game has turned out to be. With smooth character modeling, exceptional physics and stunningly detailed environments, it seemed that *TrickStyle* was destined to be a stand-out launch title. But the proof is in the playability, and this game has two serious flaws: exasperatingly difficult track design and relentless AI racers.

Any minor miscalculation, and you'll go from first to last without a glimmer of hope of regaining the

lead, while trying to navigate the brutally designed tracks, which seem designed for maximum visual appeal without much regard for how difficult they are to play. In order to unlock later tracks, you must finish first in every race, and even when you accomplish this feat, you aren't left with the sense that you could confidently repeat that performance.

Want help? Too bad. There's an NPC who leads you through four training missions, but sadly these will not prepare you for a day at the races, and documentation is sorely lacking when it comes to acquiring and pulling-off tricks beyond the basic maneuvers. — Jeffrey Adam Young

Bottom Line: *TrickStyle* is an impressive game to watch, and an infuriating game to play. Track design is sadistic, and AI players are inhumanly adept. Good mostly for increasing your stress level.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

game is really easy to get into (which makes it ideal for introducing players to Dreamcast), it isn't all that deep — this is no *Soul Calibur* or *VF3*, and most players will tire of the one-player mode pretty fast. That said, the excellent two-player mode and fast pace of the game make this the party

game of the Dreamcast launch line-up. — Chris Choloro

Bottom line: With fast action, seriously funny character design, and excellent graphics, Midway once again proves it's untouchable when it comes to arcade sports.

NextGen ★★★★★



■ For once in a Nintendo game, the characters actually look like more or less normal adults — they were deliberately changed late in the design when the whole “videogames-400-violence” brouhaha erupted again



■ Nintendo 64

Jet Force Gemini

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Rare**

Too much to do, too little to see

➔ If sheer size had any effect on the popularity of a videogame, then Jet

Force Gemini would be a shoo-in for hall-of-fame status. This lighthearted and pretty shooter is split into thirds, each section playable as one of the three protagonists: boy Juno, girl Vela, and their dog Lupus. Any one of these segments would be a complete game in its own right, but taken as a seamed-together whole, Jet Force Gemini is nothing short of gigantic.

And like a lengthy, bloated, Hollywood film, Jet Force Gemini loses entertainment value by exhausting gamers (and Rare's bag of tricks) long before the mega-journey is over: If this was half as long — and Rare had cut out all the tedious parts — it would have been twice as good. What could have been an enjoyable romp in the

Banjo-Kazooie mold instead wears out its welcome and becomes drudgery.

For example, there's a mind-boggling array of 15 weapons, from proximity mines to homing missiles, in order to keep things fresh throughout the game. But, once you amass the entire arsenal, you end up with an unwieldy list that wastes

valuable time as you shuffle through it — all while being fired upon.

Control is a cross between Turok and GoldenEye, but Jet Force Gemini underscores the problem of controlling first-person shooters on a console. Sure, we all learned how to use the scheme in GoldenEye because the game was good enough to warrant tacking the

awkward inputs, but that doesn't make the setup any less annoying.

Without a doubt, any self-respecting gamer should buy this game to witness the result of Rare's Herculean effort. But don't even entertain the idea of completing the game unless you have the patience of a saint — and over twice as much time as it took to finish *Zelda*. — Jeffrey Adam Young

Bottom Line: Jet Force Gemini has everything a gamer wants and more. Too much more. Rare would have been better off leaving some of this on the cutting-room floor.

➔ **NextGen** ★★☆☆☆

■ It's all fairly pretty, but by now we can spot a Rare game by sight without even looking at the box or title screens — High-quality, colorful, and a bit bland



MORE LITTLE GAMES

In addition to a healthy helping of multiplayer options (including eight levels, over a dozen characters, and timed, survival, and frag-count contests), Jet Force Gemini features three hidden mini-games within the game. Two of these can be found by approaching the arcade machines in the arcade room. Classic race fans will recognize the inspiration for the overhead racing game: it looks suspiciously like *Super Sprint*. The second arcade machine plays a 3D hover-racing game along the lines of *Wipeout* or *F-Zero*.

Hot Wheels: Turbo Racing

Platform: N64 Publisher: Electronic Arts Developer: Stormfront Studios



Hot Wheels offers lots of air time and plastic tracks, but while the multiplayer is fun, its other charms aren't especially long lived

Probably every kid in the industrialized world has had a couple of Hot Wheels cars at some time in their lives, and they've been practically begging for a videogame version since Pole Position. And here it is, complete with screaming cars, stunts, and plastic tracks.

Turbo Racing is a cyber version of what young boys have been doing with their die-cast cars since they escaped the crib: they make

tracks out of household items and proceed to smash, jump, flip, and roll their vehicles until they're utterly broken. Clearly based on the Beetle Adventure Racing engine, Hot Wheels rewards the player for air time and stunts with turbo boosts. Turbos are a necessity to win, making extravagant stunt work a required skill. The best sense of speed is in the first-person mode, but landing some of the more disorienting stunts is only possible

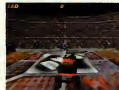
in the third-person view. Although one-player is a little rough (CPU cars seem to be able to drive anywhere with impunity and are constantly on your tail), the multiplayer and stunt modes have more to offer — they're both fun, if not deep. — Doug Trueman

Bottom Line: All in all, a fun title and a great party game, but perhaps a bit childish for hardcore racing fans.

NextGen ★★★★★

Monster Truck Madness 64

Platform: N64 Publisher: Rockstar Developer: Edge of Reality



Misereable physics, shoddy track design, and sneaky graphics make this a title to avoid

Rockstar takes off-road racing to new extremes in its new title for N64, but it's not the kind of extreme anyone should have to pay to experience. A port of the PC title, *Monster Truck Madness 64* lets players slide behind the wheel of one of twenty famous monster trucks, from Bigfoot to Grave Digger to Hollywood Hogan, inviting you to crash through well-designed courses fraught with jumps, mudholes, hairpin turns, canyons, and tunnels.

You also get a bevy of power-

ups like turbo boosts, missiles, shields, and a creative hover mode that can temporarily turn one's truck into a Harrier jet. The battle modes contain multiplayer games like hockey, soccer, and tag, and the king-of-the-hill-style Summit Rumble is brilliant in its simplicity.

Unfortunately, incredibly bad control hampers this title from the starting line. The trucks barely manage to turn even at low speeds, and the slightest bump, divot, or collision will send them flipping like a pancake. Driving in first-person mode is nearly impossible because the constant rollovers destroy any sense of orientation. — Doug Trueman

Bottom Line: If you want intense off-road gaming, play EA's *Beetle Adventure Racing* instead and run this title over with your car.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Shadow Man

Platform: N64 Publisher: Acclaim Developer: Acclaim



With a little more work, this might have been a fun, different title game. As it is, it's just different

Shadow Man is the tale of Michael LeFol, an English graduate/prodout (the manual isn't sure which) turned mystical assassin who must prevent a coming apocalypse. A hybrid of *Tomb Raider* and *Quake*, *Shadow Man* leans more towards the dexterous maneuvering of *Lara Croft* than blatant rampaging, though a fair bit of shooting is required.

Many of Mike's *Shadow Man*'s weapons have substantial homing capabilities when fired blindly, which, oddly, removes any need for the

included, trendy sniper mode. The control is loose to the point of frustration, with constantly missed jumps (and untimely deaths) while navigating the large 3D space. The gameplay is standard platform/shooter fare with a Caribbean folklore twist; players explore the real world and the supernatural Deadside retreating *Dark Souls*, killing zombies, solving puzzles, avoiding traps, and gaining strength in both guns and voodoo weapons.

The developers were clearly enamored of the game's mythological roots and non-linear gameplay, and the complex storyline and environment could have earned *Shadow Man* a cult of its own. Unfortunately, though, the title feels rushed; additional time spent ironing out kinks would have earned it another star. — Doug Trueman

Bottom Line: Sadly, this is just a well-intentioned misfire.

NextGen ★★★★★

WWF Attitude

Platform: N64 Publisher: Acclaim Sports Developer: Acclaim Sports



Attitude is flat, ugly, and not very entertaining, and not even the expansive create-a-wrestler mode can save the title

The increasing popularity of professional wrestling has brought welcome competition to the games based on the sport. Acclaim's last game before it loses the WWF license, *Attitude* is the sequel to last year's *Warzone*.

This year's refresh offers a deeper create-a-wrestler mode, 40 different superstars to choose from, and the best wrestler intros to ever grace a home console, including authentic music, lighting, and special

effects. The wrestlers look good, the announcers are passable, and the lighting is well done.

The problem? Just like *Warzone*, the wrestlers don't seem to interact with the environment in any believable manner: walking and wrestling like broken robots. Worst of all, the game's control scheme is still closer to that of a badly designed fighting game — up to five button pushes to perform a move just doesn't result in the right

padding for a wrestling match. Add to that the fact that wrestlers don't sell the moves, the voice samples are randomly placed and nonsensical, and the collision detection is still horrible, and you get a game that's very pretty but not much fun. — Daniel Erickson

Bottom Line: Worth a rental for WWF fans, but everyone else should just wait for THQ and EA to take their shots.

NextGen ★★★★★



■ Thanks to a flawless control scheme, catching air and pulling off insane tricks has never been easier

SWITCH KICKFLIP TO INDY
525



■ You can pull tricks off of any surface you can find, giving the game a sense of complete freedom

■ PlayStation

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Neversoft

The best skateboarding game ever

➔ With the number of snowboarding games we've seen in the past few years, it's surprising that there have only been a handful of skating games. In fact, since 720° in the arcades, there hasn't been a skating

game that has been any good — until now. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* not only captures the feel of skating perfectly, but it combines excellent graphics, incredibly tight controls, and a great soundtrack into the most attractive package PlayStation

owners are likely to see all year.

The key to the game's brilliance is in its incredibly intuitive control scheme. Players can pull off tricks with the touch of a button, and linking tricks together is as simple as can be. Now, instead of becoming simplistic and boring, the timing on the moves is such that the challenge is in knowing which moves to link together at what times. As your skill level increases, you learn to link tricks into huge chains that yield higher scores. To keep players from merely repeating the same moves over and over, maximum points are only awarded the first time you do a certain string of moves.

Then add to all of this an

accomplished graphics engine and some top-notch animation, and you have a game that novices and experts alike will play for hours on end. There are plenty of tracks to choose from, six different skaters, and a career mode that allows you to unlock secrets as you get better at each level. There's even a kick-ass two-player mode with several different subgames. Overall, there is plenty of meat here for anyone, and nothing has been left

out. — Blake Fischer

The Bottom Line: Whether you're a hardcore skater or just a wannabe, this will satisfy. A must-have for anyone with a PlayStation.

NextGen ★★★★★



■ If you jump on the hood of a moving car, you can score big. If you don't jump, you eat asphalt — hard

YES, HE REALLY IS THE MAN

At the ripe old age of 31 with a professional career spanning almost two decades, Tony Hawk is practically an ancient among the roster of professional skateboarders, but if anyone thinks he's even remotely past it, no further proof was needed than his performance at the 1999 X Games in San Francisco. Although he only took home the bronze in the vert competition after a fall in the last round, he won Best Trick by pulling the world's first-ever 900° (he's two and a half times around, for the mathematically challenged), a feat unmatched in skateboarding history. And yes, you can pull off the 900° in the game.

Demolition Racer

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Infogrames Developer: Pitbull Syndicate



Don't let the good-looking screen shot fool you — this game is the pits, and plays like something from PlayStation's first generation

Demolition Racer was developed by much of the same team as the original Destruction Derby from 1993 six years ago, and it shows, in just about every way. Although this game has some "modern" enhancements like shortcuts (which seem sort of pasted in), the game mechanics might as well have been transplanted whole and bleeding from Destruction Derby.

Visually the game looks every bit the latter-day PlayStation title, with detailed textures and a fair amount of variety. Other than that, it might as well be five

years old: The car control is as faking around the center, not as if they are actually responding to the wheels. You'll also notice that every other car on the track is exactly like yours. Apparently, this is how the designers managed to get 16 of them out there at once, but it completely negates any advantage in choosing one car over another — or motivation to earn locked cars.

Worst of all, the game is widely inconsistent: Points are awarded by colliding with other cars, and in theory the faster you hit one, the greater the

points. It really, it seems almost random, barely tapping a rear bumper in a tum causes an opponent to explode, while slamming into a totally stationary car on the next bend yields no score at all. The steering and control are likewise almost totally unpredictable, and — in a serious and unforgivable bug — even the camera angle jumps around, from high-and-back to first-person, for absolutely no reason. — *Jeff Lundgren*

Bottom Line: Steer clear of this smoking wreck.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Juggernaut

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Jaleco Developer: Tonkinhouse



Like Myst, the puzzles in Juggernaut require some thought. Unlike Myst, the puzzles in Juggernaut don't require a hint book to solve

Juggernaut is a game that most hardcore gamers should probably avoid. It lacks any action, and the graphics are merely passable. It favors thinking over reflexes, which is not always a bad thing, but it also lacks any sense of pace. The real point of interest is the story: as the main character you have entered your girlfriend's mind, attempting to save her soul from the devil. If you fail, you will both be consigned to hell for eternity.

Actually, Juggernaut's outbox spot in game history is to be (hopefully) the last of the Myst clones. And, as far as that

goes, it does show a little evolution in this most deservedly reviled of genres, since unlike Myst the puzzles in Juggernaut actually make a certain amount of sense. They aren't all easy, but they also aren't impossible. Nearly every puzzle in the game can be solved through a combination of in-game clues and basic common sense.

Interaction with the world is done via a cursor. On a standard screen, the cursor will reveal which directions you can move. If there is something to be seen, the cursor will switch to a "search"

mode. Moving the cursor over an item activates a hot spot and moves the story along. This is about the farthest thing from innovative, but it works as well as any controller-based point-and-click interface we've come across.

— *Adam Pavlacka*

Bottom Line: Juggernaut isn't anything new or especially exciting, but a solid entry in the point-and-click genre, with a better puzzle selection and more intriguing story than most.

NextGen ★★★★★

Madden NFL 2000

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports



The muted graphics of Madden NFL 2000 make even the garish jerseys of the Tennessee Titans look dull and washed-out

Madden is the workhorse of football videogames he's seen the field perhaps one time too many, but remains solid and dependable. That said, this game presents you with a comprehensive set of options, modes, in-game tricks, control functions, and opportunities for both finesse and straight-up, grind-'em-out play. On offense, you can pull off a bit of sleight-of-hand by pushing the triangle button, selecting a wide receiver, and altering his pass route in the intriguing "Madden Challenge" mode, you're rewarded with points (redeemable for special codes) for well-

executed plays and football trivia answers.

But small problems mar the surface of Madden's highway. Animations are mostly smooth, but there's some slowdown when the players pile up for a tackle. AI remains a sticking point — at times the computer-controlled player won't bother to attempt a three-point field-goal play when it's clearly in its best interests.

Perhaps the game's greatest handicap is its predictability. The same tricks that beat the game before are, more likely than not, apt to beat the game now. Want to roll to a touchdown, even on the

game's All-Pro level? Try a quick series of two-step drop passes, or a rollout sideline pass. Want to score endzone deflections on a computer-run defense? Quickly select the defender nearest to the pass and jump for dear life. Still, plowing the middle with Eddie George or scrambling madly for safety with Vinny Testaverde is a satisfying way to kill some time.

— *Greg Orlando*

Bottom Line: Madden loyalists will find more to love, but this franchise still plays second fiddle to GameDay.

NextGen ★★★★★

NFL GameDay 2000

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: 989 Studios Developer: 989 Studios



There's actually starting to be something retro about the graphics here — the playing Genesis football in 1995

GameDay is 989's premier franchise, and the 2000 edition continues that trend nicely. The best new feature is the potential for micro- and macro-management. You can take this game however you like it — as a quick-paced, eminently controllable football game, as something to dive into and select patterns for receivers and running backs; or as a way to play the manager scene, trading players, drafting and signing up-greedy free agents. It's even possible to import players from NCAA GameDay 2000. Basically, every feature from last

year is intact and improved.

Total control passing is still an intrinsic part of the game, and there are far more plays to choose from, so the on-field action has really opened up from this time last year. Blitz fans, who like the action but not the complexity can also get a lot out of this, as there's an option to play in just one position.

Animation has been stepped up a notch, and not just in appearance. Like Sega's NFL 2K, motion capture is cardio-sensitive, so a leg grab has a different effect than a high-charging

tackle. Unfortunately, while this looks great for a PlayStation game, it pales next to Sega's effort — PlayStation is aging, and this shows it. Graphics usually don't matter, but if you have both, it's tough to go back to GameDay after NFL 2K, despite GameDay's deeper feature set. Still, on PlayStation, there's nothing better.

— *Frank O'Connor*

Bottom Line: The top PlayStation football game gets deeper, but it ain't the best-looking football game in town anymore.

NextGen ★★★★★



G-Police: Weapons of Justice

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Pagnola Developer: Pagnola UK



■ G-Police is certainly pretty, but it doesn't play very well. In fact, it's a nigh-perfect example of style getting in the way of substance

This second game in the G-Police series is still plagued by the problems that were apparent in the original, namely: draw distance, aircraft control, and weapons range. This time around, though, the weaknesses overshadow the strengths.

While the cinematic sequences show some of the most stunning pre-rendered animation to date, in stark contrast are the ludicrously short draw-distances of sycscrapers when cruising through the partially populated cities of G-Police: Weapons of Justice. To ameliorate this problem, wire frames of

distinct buildings pop-up on your copter's windshield before the fished-out version appears. But, with dark skies, extremely sensitive steering controls, and fast enemy craft, you'll find yourself meeting many buildings — and sometimes even the road — head-on. To add to the confusion, you have wingmen and backup ground teams, and you'll need to master five different vehicles in the course of the game.

The 30 regular missions and 15 hidden missions are elaborately designed with plenty of surprises for maximum

dramatic effect, but these get buried by control issues and the too-fishy but ultimately confusing visuals. Two things that you'll undoubtedly find frustrating in each mission: trying to find and follow your team, and trying to track an enemy aircraft as it quickly flies away and out-of-range. — Jeffrey Adam Young

Bottom Line: It seems G-Police: Weapons of Justice was designed to be a very complex and full game, but in the process, the designers forgot to make the game playable as well.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Jet Moto 3

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: 989 Studios Developer: Pacific Coast Power and Light

Jet Moto 3 is another title that has been usurped by the ever-expanding 989 Studios. The original game was a triumphant success that put the then-small, relatively unknown developer SingleTrac on the map. The sequel, though not as successful, took the series to new heights with more bikes, tracks, and air than Michael Jordan saw in his whole career.

Rest assured that racing aficionados and fans of the series will rejoice again once they get their hands on this title

Apparently having learned a lesson from its summarizing of the lucrative Twisted Metal series, 989 Studios has more than made amends with Jet Moto 3. The developers have kept the same frenetic racing that made the first two titles popular and cleaned up the visuals, then added more magnetic grappling for shortcuts and hairpin turns. Perhaps most impressive of all, they maintained a fixed framerate despite multiple riders and dynamic lighting. Although the graphics do suffer from some jodation

and shearing, these minor flaws are easy to overlook given the wicked gameplay.

The camera sometimes wanders in the heat of a race, so practice and memorization of the tracks is a must, but players should be open-minded and always be on the lookout for shortcuts and ways to exploit their turbo charges. — Doug Trueman

Bottom Line: In a season with relatively few worthwhile PlayStation racing games, Jet Moto 3 proves to be fast, fun, and exciting.



■ After a brief stumble with the second installment, Jet Moto 3 is back on track

NextGen ★★★★★

NFL Xtreme 2

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: 989 Studios Developer: 989 Studios

Like the original NFL Xtreme, NFL Xtreme 2 starts with a good premise: Take a few NFL stars, stick them on teams of five, and let them play smash-mouth football with huge hits and in-your-face celebrations. No rules. No referee. No penalties.

In other words, rip off NFL Blitz. Unfortunately, the premise is about as cool as the game gets. Sure, there are some big hits, and the taunts flow freely, but Blitz did it better even the first time around, and Xtreme's feeble

humor only goes so far: Slapping real faces on the porky bodies doesn't help much, either.

Technically, there is some good stuff here — not much, mind you, but some. The framerate is up to 30 fps, and players zip across the field at a frantic pace. There's the usual stirring football music, and the on-field chatter, delivered by real players, can be amusing. But even the music and trash talk get repetitive after a spare hour or so, and the action doesn't last much

beyond that.

This is because the biggest culprit is the playbook. You have ten seconds to find a play and call it, but the system is unwieldy, and you often wind up just calling the same formations over and over out of sheer frustration at being unable to pick anything else. — John Lee

Bottom Line: Football purists will not be amused. Blitz fans will not be amused. In fact, unless you're looking for a simple diversion and don't mind an erratic playbook, neither will you.



■ Big hits are the order of the day in NFL Xtreme 2

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

RC Stunt Copter

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Shiny Developer: Titus



■ At \$40, this is way cheaper than shooting out for a \$1,000 model, and almost as much fun

Originally previewed more than two years ago (it was featured in our Top 25 games to watch in **NG II '97**), RC Stunt Copter was conceived by Shiny's Dave Perry as a game that would take two people (a programmer/mathematician and an artist) six months to finish. It's a little late, and the team grew a bit, but Perry's vision for the product has been realized perfectly.

RC Stunt Copter is an absolutely perfect simulation of a radio-controlled model helicopter (which uses a

controller almost identical to the dual analog, which the game really requires). Because actual RC copters are incredibly hard to fly much of the fun and challenge of the game is simply in learning to control the copter itself. Since helicopters are fundamentally unstable, it's hard to get right, but you get better with every try, the perfect recipe for addiction.

And additive the game is, with eight helicopters to fly and 30+ different Pilot Wings-style missions to fly them in. The

two-player mode is ingenious, and if you've ever felt cheated by an ending movie, you won't this time.

The only problem we had was that most of the arenas were slightly too small. Other than that, this quirky title is well worth a place on your shelf (and in your PlayStation). — Chris Charis

Bottom Line: A unique game with unique control, this game is a winner.

NextGen ★★★★★

Star Wars: Episode I

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: LucasArts Developer: Big Ape

Have you ever felt "different"? Do you have fantastic reflexes beyond that of a normal person? Can you sense enemies around you that you cannot see? Do you have inhuman patience? If so, you may be a Jedi and therefore qualified to play *Star Wars: Episode I*.

It will be a hard life. One without reward. You find tasks that will by even the most dedicated of warriors. Enemies will attack you from off the screen, obscured by the top-down camera. Your Jedi jumping skill will be tested as well, because what is a platform game without

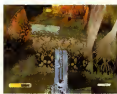
the most insane of jumping puzzles to break up the action? You not only fly as the Force, and while your ability to use the Force push will come in handy, it cannot save you from the mediocrity pushed upon you.

Even your friends and allies will appear confused, and, even if they profess to be following you, be assured that they will get caught on all corners and other obstacles that litter their path. You will have to watch them closely because while they might not find any problems with walking into enemy fire,

their death will weigh heavily on your soul and cause you to restart the mission.

Fear was Big Ape's ally with this one. Fear of the original idea, fear of fun, and fear of being technologically impressive. And, after many hours of death and re-loading, you will begin to fear that you have made a bad purchase. Fear leads to anger; anger leads to hate, and hate leads to suffering. This game is the path to the Dark Side. —Blake Fischer

Bottom Line: If you are not afraid, you will be. You will be.

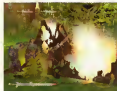


■ **Messa Jar Jar Binks. Need we say more!**

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Xena: Warrior Princess

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Electronic Arts Developer: Universal Interactive



■ **Xena manages that rarest of videogame feats: a game based on a license that's both a decent game and faithful to its source.**

Xena is one of those licenses that ought to be a natural for a videogame, and thankfully, the developers at Universal did quite a nice job. It ain't perfect, but it's still a good showing.

The game looks terrific, with lush, colorful environments and quick, fluid character animation (although it's worth pointing out that the cut scene animation is patetically bad). Some real thought went into the overall game design too, which neatly avoids the usual "run-jump-strike" grind with a number of action puzzles and creative ways of destroying

enemies. And special kudos for how they handled the chakram — when you throw Xena's "round killing thing," the view switches to a chakram-cam so you can steer it to its target. It's a cool trick, and it turns out that two-thirds of the puzzles are solved by tossing the chakram at something, that's actually staying true to the TV show itself, so no fault there.

There are some minor camera annoyances and the control isn't as snappy as it could be, but neither problem is especially bothersome except in tight spaces (although one set of

frustrating levels, perhaps appropriately set in Hades, seem practically designed to point out these flaws). Also, you'd think they could come up with a better storyline than having Xena's gal pal Gabrielle kidnapped — twice. It's not only a videogame cliché, it doesn't even happen on the actual show much anymore. —Jeff Lundgren

Bottom Line: Solidly crafted, with a few nice touches and a thoughtful design, this one comes HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

NextGen ★★★★★

Wipeout 3

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Psygnosis Developer: Psygnosis

It was probably inevitable that the *Wipeout* series would falter somewhere along the line, and lo, it's happened. It's still pretty good, as far as that goes, but likely both newcomers and fans will be disappointed.

The graphics have been tweaked to the point where the game is now clearer than ever, but the tracks themselves aren't anything you haven't seen before. In fact, they're considerably less, with a stripped-down

simplicity that holds little of the attention to detail seen in previous games in the series. Why, in spite of this, the game slows down when there's more than one or two vehicles on screen is beyond us, although otherwise the series' trademark sense of speed is mostly in place. However, that hardly makes up for such otherwise uninspired design.

The difficulty level is all over the map too. True, this series is known for

its one-player challenge, but this time first racing circuit is incredibly easy, while the second is nigh impossible to beat.

The game's interface, however, is about the worst we've ever seen, with utterly confusing menus and a murky, nearly unrecognizable in-game HUD. —Jeff Lundgren

Bottom Line: It's not terrible, but for a series known for its "gee whiz" level of quality, this is a serious misstep.



■ **The latest Wipeout shows the series is moving into decline.**

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Tail Concerto

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Atlus Developer: Bandai



■ **Chase evil kittens, catch evil kittens, toss evil kittens over your shoulder. And so it goes in Tail Concerto, a game that's almost impossible not to like.**

On the surface, this is an almost painfully typical 3D action-adventure aimed at kids, but bear with us for a second here. The bizarre premise (and no, we still don't know what the title means) is that an army of cat people is causing no end of trouble for a nation of dog people, so an intrepid, mecha-equipped doggy policeman has to fly from place to place in a dirigible, then run around a series of 3D environments while using the long, flexible arms of the mech to quite literally scoop up the evil kitties.

As you've probably guessed,

whatever your age, on a weird, goofy level there is simply no way not to like this game. As its intended audience is doubtless aged ten and under, it's not especially challenging, nor is it technologically groundbreaking. But for adults with a sense of humor (or just under the influence of something), it does hold a certain irresistible charm and more than a few outright belly laughs. True, the fun is less in the gameplay than in everything going on around it, and the shine wears off well before the end, but it controls reasonably well, has an easy

sense of pace, and from the moment you first charge into a group of superdeformed kitties and start tossing them over your shoulder, get on this big, silly grin on your face that just doesn't let go. —Jeff Lundgren

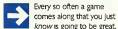
Bottom Line: Pick this up on the cheap, if possible, then gather some friends, get on the right frame of mind, and surprise them by throwing this in. You'll be a hit until at least the party is over, guaranteed.

NextGen ★★★★★

■ After waking the dragon, Arokh, and "soul bonding" with him, Rynn takes flight — and if you don't spend a the next solid minute with a goofy grin on your face while flying around, you're no gamer



■ Rynn meets a trio of succubi who flirt equally with both the dragon and her — just another odd little moment in a game full of them



Every so often a game comes along that you just know is going to be great. From its earliest beta, Drakan has been on that list, and if it doesn't quite fulfill those high expectations, it's still a mighty fine game.

The faults, however few, are significant: while the environments are gorgeous, the characters never quite measure up to this standard.

MULTIPLAYER

Drakan does include multiplayer online games — three of them, in fact — but you have to wonder why, other than as a bullet point on the box. Melee Deathmatch enables you, as Rynn, to run around with up to seven other Rynns in hand-to-hand slashfests. The Dragon Duel sets loose eight dragons to fly around and shoot trash weapons at each other. Last, Master of the Dragon has eight Rynns fighting over control of one Arokh. These are sort of fun in their way, for, oh, maybe an hour, then instantly forgettable.

Hey folks, this is an adventure game with action, not the other way around. Whatever the marketing department might tell you, not every game needs multiplayer options. OK?

■ PC

Drakan: Order of the Flame

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Surreal Software**

This beauty really flies

Though made of single mesh slabs and detailed textures, they still could use a few dozen more polygons.

There are some minor problems with game balance as well. Enemies are unforgiving and Rynn's weapons never seem to do quite enough damage. Stealth is encouraged in the manual, but while there's a certain thrill in tip-toeing up behind a sleeping "wartog" and knifing it in

the back, it's also less fun than an out-and-out brawl, y'know?

But these minor hitches only stand out because everything else is so damn good. The second you first take flight, the game gets its hooks in you and never lets go, and the third-person action is equally satisfying. If most of the puzzles aren't especially difficult to

figure out, they're nicely varied and fairly clever in a few cases, and thanks to an in-game map that literally spells out what you need to do next, feeling lost isn't an option.

— Jeff Lundrigan

Bottom Line: It's not quite the end-all and be-all we'd hoped for, but this is still great, great stuff.

NextGen ★★★★★



■ Nefarious machines and dangerous underground chambers are just a few of the game's gorgeous environments

Civilization II: Test of Time

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **MicroProse** Developer: **Hasbro Interactive**



Hey look, it's Civ II... again... oh goody...

Is it possible to grow bone-weary of playing Civilization II?

Thus, it is a great game — it landed at number four in the "Top 50 games of all time" in **NG 50**, making it officially one of the best ever. And we'll be playing it for years. But how many permutations can we take before the years start rolling in?

And that's the strength — and weakness — of Civilization II: Test of Time. The classic game is still here, and some good strong side games are

tacked in as well, including a science-fiction scenario that is somewhat reminiscent of Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, and a couple of fantasy worlds full of sorcerers, witches, and wild beasts.

Yes, the characters change in place of infantrymen, you summon hairy white beasts called Repellers. Stomping into a nest of barbarians may bring on a pack of snarling wolves or a boneyard of warior skeletons instead of camel caravans, you dispatch slug-like creatures

called Antbers. There are also Unders, Typhlouses, Selmgurdes, Oghans, and so on and so on. But you still follow the same Civ II mechanics to cultivate and improve your universe.

And that's good. Really. And the game is lots of fun. Really. If only it weren't for those darned years. —John Lee

Bottom Line: Maybe it's time to say, "Okay, enough of a good thing. Bring on Civilization III."

NextGen ★★★★★

Darkstone

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **G.O.D.** Developer: **Delphine**



Yes, it looks like something else, but Darkstone holds its own.

At first blush, it's easy to look at Darkstone and shrug, "Eh, Diablo clone." And, really, it's tough to overlook the similarities. However, dismissing it out of hand would be a mistake, because it's also tough to overlook the fact that it's a lot of fun, and it only takes about ten minutes before the differences between Blizzard's dungeon crawl and this one become apparent.

For one thing, Darkstone is completely in 3D, enabling you to zoom

in and out and rotate the environment at will — it seems like a simple thing, but it makes a big difference. Second, you control two characters at a time, allowing for more varied strategies and a pretty smooth multiplayer setup. Last, the RPG elements are a lot stronger than in Diablo, as are the puzzle-solving elements, making advancing a character and getting through the story a bit more involved than just hacking through tons of critters. Still, that proves a bit of a

double-edged sword, since keeping track of which NPC was asking for which item gets to be a pain as the game marches on, but it's never a huge distraction.

In fact, Darkstone does just about everything right. Heck, even the voice acting is pretty good. —Jeff Lundgren

Bottom Line: An addictive little title that is, in some ways, even better than the trendsetter it closely resembles.

NextGen ★★★★★

PC

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

Publisher: **Westwood** Developer: **Westwood**

After all these years, the original RTS remains the same as it ever was

→ Waiting for Tiberian Sun has seemed interminable for C&C's legions of fans, and now that Westwood's cash-cow is finally here, mixed feelings abound. The first thing fans of

the series will notice is just how similar it looks to every other C&C title. The graphics, the intros, the menu bar — they're all there, they all look a little better than they used to. And that's all.

The biggest change that Tiberian Sun does bring to the series is more units. Both the NOD and GDI forces have been overhauled and have specialized units unique to each side. The GDI tend to focus their technology on air forces, while the NOD have taken to burrowing under the ground and using expensive cloaking devices to hide their entire bases. Unique troops, such as the mutant hijacker who can take over enemy vehicles and whose production is limited to one per side, make multiplayer now more of a strategic war than the previous games, which tended to encourage

a build-up-and-rush technique.

But where are the great leaps forward in gameplay and technology that one would

expect from years of work? Where are the earth-shattering graphics and genre-breaking realism? Not to be found here, unfortunately. This title still pales in comparison to the mighty Starcraft. —Daniel Erickson

Bottom Line: Westwood has fine-tuned Command & Conquer, but that's not enough to please the RTS-crazed gaming public.

NextGen ★★★★★



For all the money that was obviously just into the cut scenes, they still feel awfully cheese-coated.



The little stripes under this guy mean he's a veteran. Keep him healed and he'll be worth a whole squad of newbies.



Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **3DO** Developer: **3DO**

For those who objected to the way Operation Desert Storm left international hoodlum Saddam Hussein still in power, 3DO offers a chance to go back and finish the job.

Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer is an arcade-style 3D tank shooter set in the Persian Gulf a few years from now. Players take command of a prototype M1Q tank — the "Hammer" — and blast their way through several desert locations (and by the way, ever notice how fond 3D

programmers are of featureless sandy deserts? No need to draw in treesome forests, complex urban areas, or detailed military structures).

It's an easy game to get into. Tanks move forward or backward via the arrow keys, turning is accomplished simply by aiming your weapon with the mouse, while right and left clicks fire the weapons. System requirements are modest: enough for most low-end machines, even with the 3D engine. So, in a word, it's all very simple.

But it's not much fun. There's some entertaining play here, but it doesn't last long. The missions get monotonous: You drive around in 3D sand and blow up tanks and trucks and buildings. And that's about it. In fact, it's rare to find such an arcade-style action game on PC, and playing this shows why. —John Lee
Bottom Line: Saddam can relax. Sure, the troops are coming, and this time they may not stop short of Baghdad, but by the time they get there they'll be bored out of their skulls.



■ You get some satisfying explosions in the Gulf War shooter, but not much else

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Interplay** Developer: **Quicksilver**



■ A Romulan frigate attacks a Federation ship (the horizontal bars show the remaining strength of the shields)

After a whole catalog of Star Trek games gone bad, they're finally beginning to get it right (although given some of the other Trek titles on the way, we'll see how long that lasts).

Star Trek: Starfleet Command is a complex real-time strategy game with a steep learning curve, but it's eminently rewarding. Based on the rich play of the Star Trek Battles board game, it's stuffed with options. You can slow, deliberate starship naval combat, with flashes of high-speed terror that leave you

gasping. You'll be drowning in buttons and menus, trying to make correct decisions even as enemy fire streaks toward you.

You can play as any of six races, some familiar (the Federation, Klingons, Romulans, the Gorn), a couple less recognizable (Hydrans, Lyrians), plus a few Orion pirates thrown in for good measure, which makes for a huge number of ships. Controls differ in color but fortunately fill much the same roles for each race, since learning new

controls for each would be a killer.

Best of all, it looks and plays like Star Trek should. A solid 3D engine provides dozens of detailed ships, weapon tracks, and fiery explosions. Players receive rewards, promotions, and prestige points for doing well, opening access to more complicated missions, improved spacecraft, and other space-war staples. —John Lee

Bottom Line: Give us more power, Scotty. This one's a 10.

NextGen ★★★★★

Warhammer 40,000: Rites of War

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **SSI** Developer: **DreamForge**

Rites of War, the latest installment in the Warhammer 40,000 series, will deck you out in the most colorful combat uniforms this side of Ico's Clown.

You'll march through this turn-based strategy game wearing all the primary colors — red, yellow, blue, greens. If enemy forces don't see you coming, they'll surely hear your loud footsteps.

Maybe the colors and noisy marching are due to your alien nature. You don't play Space Marines this time around. You're part of the mighty Eldar, and you've

come to a human world to reclaim artifacts and historical records, but the dumb humans misunderstand and start shooting. No problem. Just annihilate them.

Aliens and humans are nicely balanced, and they tangle on a hex-based battlefield, thanks to the Panzer General II engine. The game offers 24 missions, plus additional single and multiplayer scenarios, and an experience system adds some nice RPG elements. The longer you survive, the tougher you get.

There's some good play here, but there

are also problems. Musak is repetitious, replay value is low. Perhaps the biggest problem lies in the game's steep requirements. You'll need 64MB of RAM if your machine can't live up to the expectations, you may as well prepare yourself for some painfully slow, hiccuppy movement. —John Lee

Bottom Line: If your PC has the muscle, you may enjoy this one for several days. Especially if you've got a good pair of sunglasses to mute the glare from those uniforms.



■ Fantasy and Panzer General II combine to create colorful hex-based battle

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

F-16 Aggressor

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Bethesda Softworks** Developer: **General Simulations Incorporated**



■ F-16 Aggressor is an excellent simulation — it just isn't a very good game

As a simulation, F-16 Aggressor is excellent. The F-16 is well modeled, and the fly-by-wire system handles nicely. The attention to detail included in the simulation is superb, with everything from weapons systems to g-forces properly modeled.

Where F-16 Aggressor begins to show its weaknesses is when you try to play it as a game. All the missiles and "instant action" scenarios required by a modern sim are here, but playing through them feels more like work than a

diversion. F-16 Aggressor focuses on medium combat, which means that long-distance engagements are not unusual. Traditional dog-fighting is rare, with a typical skirmish involving acquiring a missile lock and firing from a mile or so away, then moving on to the next target.

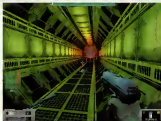
A single missile is more than enough to take out most targets, including your own plane. Mastering evasive techniques is necessary, otherwise skirmishes will be quite short.

Although a steep learning curve is par

for the course in a combat flight sim (and F-16's manual isn't even nearly the tome that, say, Falcon 40 comes with), the realism still obscures any sense of fun. —Adam Pinivka

Bottom line: F-16 Aggressor deserves high praise as a pure simulator. It accurately depicts the F-16, and it runs on an average system. If you want to train as a pilot, it's terrific. If you're looking for an enjoyable combat experience, however, look elsewhere.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆



■ You've never seen a finer faster-than-light engine core, but the guards on the way there are a royal pain



■ Overwhelming! Actually the interface tucks away nicely at the press of a button

■ PC
System Shock 2
 ■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: Looking Glass, Irrational Games

Dark corridors, cybernetic ninjas, and thou

➔ Just where does a design team begin when the assignment is to continue the retro-gaming legacy that is *System Shock*? Its atmospheric details combined with subtle RPG trappings have given it a reputation that only seems to grow by the year, especially as more games (like *Half-Life*) follow in its footsteps. Accepting this difficult task, Irrational Games has created its tribute to the forbear of modern first-person shooters — and if the resulting game has one fault, it would be that the recipe was followed a bit too closely.

You get around with a streamlined combination of the original interface and the *Dark Engine* previously praised in *Thief*. The press of a button switches from action mode, where the interface is functionally invisible, to

an Inventory mode where you can manage everything on the fly. In the course of the game, you collect cyber modules that provide you with credits for skill and attribute upgrades. Although this sounds like there's a lot of depth, the divisions aren't balanced enough for the creative player to stray far from the formula of upgrading hacking skills and strength.

Naturally, there are plenty of opportunities to put down moaning zombies and Borg-like service droids, and here the physics engine boasts its accuracy as wrenches clang together in hand-to-hand combat and thrown objects roll flatly to rest. If the pacing of the combat seems a little slow and deliberate, keep in mind that combat isn't strictly what this game is all about.

If there's one major complaint,

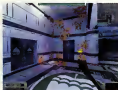


■ Look, it's not going to help anybody if you lose your head

it's that the low-color textures and angular level design haven't changed much from the original. Especially when compared to current standards (like, say, *Half-Life*), this is a considerable fault against the game's entertainment value. — Buck DeFore

Bottom Line: Bluntly put, *System Shock 2* is a welcome visit to the lost arts of the good old days, and an immersive experience as long as you don't mind some of the cobwebs that come along with it.

NextGen ★★★★★



■ It's your job to keep the walls clean and free of biologically mutated muck such as this, then hack into security to keep moving forward

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If you played the original, the sequel should be familiar: you're on the mad scientist's quest for the first faster-than-light starship when you awaken without any memory of the tragic murders and mutations lying around you. On the journey, you gather audio logs that slowly piece together the source of your current dilemma. The plot stagnates in some spots, but it's a testament to the ageless qualities of the original that the vagaries of manmade artificial intelligence gone bad is still an intriguing concept that might even make you flinch a few times.

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The corresponding strengths of the Next Gen reader

→ During the early issues of your magazine, I found it quite refreshing that you tried to be as unbiased as possible and that you usually weren't heavily influenced by all the hype coming out of the industry. However, in your most recent issue, you spoke with a few if not many of the developers for PSX2 at Sony's developers conference. At the end of the article, one could surmise — as you did — that the PSX2 will be a nightmare to make games for. You then went on, however, to try and put a positive spin on what seems to be the PSX2's major Achilles' heel. Why? The Sega Saturn was a nightmare to develop for and developers voiced their disposition by making games for systems that didn't require as much effort. Even the N64 was slightly criticized for being harder to develop for than the PSX, which at the time was undoubtedly the easiest system to develop for. If the PSX2 will be difficult to program for, then I would expect your magazine to point out that flaw with the same consistency as you did with the N64 and Saturn.

QJ2hearts@aol.com

There's a fundamental difference between Saturn and PlayStation 2. Saturn took incredible efforts to deliver merely OK, PlayStation-level results, but the same incredible effort on PlayStation 2 will deliver results that have simply never been seen before. Everyone we've spoken to says that if you're not willing to make the effort on PlayStation 2, you can still achieve Dreamcast-like results, but the extra effort will pay off tremendously. That accounts for the difference in programmer attitudes. On Saturn, it was "Oh, I have to do

all this work to do the same thing the PlayStation guy does in an afternoon," but on PlayStation 2, it's "Wow, if I do all this work, I can do things no one's ever seen before." We accurately reported the attitude of programmers we spoke to who attended the conference. That said, we noted in a news story last month that some publishers are starting to balk at the development costs for PlayStation 2, figuring they can do better with lower-cost games for Dreamcast than by making the PlayStation 2 effort.

→ I strongly think that you should mention important info about the games that you review. First of all, you should mention the difficulty of the game — whether easy, medium, hard, or extremely difficult. You could also put the number of hours it will take to complete by the average gamer. Last but not least, the price of the game. I think that these suggestions will make reviews even more comprehensive than they already are.

Michael A. Haddad
Artcun144@aol.com

Unfortunately, the difference in skill levels among gamers makes trying to nail down the difficulty impossible — what's easy for us may be impossible for others. Ditto with play time. There was one recent incident at Imagine where the reviewer for Kain at one magazine took two hours to get through a part that took another reviewer 15 minutes. We do mention if a game is especially easy or difficult, or short or long, but trying to codify length and difficulty is impossible. As for price, most games are \$39-\$49, so we don't

feel it's worth the space to keep repeating the same price in every review.

→ I'm starting to have second thoughts about the launch of the PlayStation 2. Now I've just read on your web site that the final machine is going to be launched in January in Japan for \$400! That price is just ri-goddamn-diculous! Why would anyone but the extreme Sony fan buy this machine when they could get a Dreamcast for 200 bucks? In my opinion, Sony has screwed itself by making something that is by all means truly revolutionary, but is going to pay the price because of what it takes to make such a machine. In today's market,

it is pretty much unacceptable to pay over \$250 for a console, and even that is plenty enough to pay. I'm just worried because when PSX2 launches in America, it'll probably be even more expensive.

Darren Lasso
lasonator@hotmail.com

Actually, most consoles came down in price when they launch in the US, but more importantly, you're not the only one who knows that a \$400 console won't sell no matter what. Sony knows too. If there is any way to launch PlayStation 2 at a mass-market price (\$299 or below), it will happen. But you're right: If Sony can't launch under that price, it could find itself losing its console lead.

Sega's latest frontier

EverQuest and Ultima Online were hyped years before release. Why are Turbine and/or Sega being so stingy with Frontier info? Being a console gamer and roleplayer, I am very interested in the game.

Justin Shadwell
mr_twat_999@yahoo.com

Unfortunately, Sega is staying tight-lipped on the game, probably because the company simply does not yet have all its ducks in a row online-wise — while web-browsing capabilities are in Dreamcast now, the server structures for online games have not been established (the Japanese server structure is totally cost-prohibitive in the US, unless you'd be willing to make a long-distance call to Sega every time you wanted to play online). But here's what we can say about Frontier: It's a massively multiplayer science-fiction roleplaying game with a huge world — much bigger than EverQuest or Ultima Online's — which will probably run under Windows CE, and will probably share a lot of code with Turbine's Asheron's Call, currently in beta testing. We're twisting arms at Sega and Turbine as you read this, and we should be bringing you more information soon.

■ ASHERON'S CALL



■ Asheron's Call is fantasy and Frontier will be sci-fi, but Turbine hopes to use what it learns with Asheron's to make Frontier shine

I've just read on your web site that the PlayStation 2 is going to be launched in January in Japan for \$400!

➔ I believe that in order for Sega to be successful with its *new* system, it needs to make a sequel to one of its great roleplaying games: *Phantasy Star*, *Shining in the Darkness*, *Shining Force*, or *Landstalker*. Any one of these games would make me want to go out and buy a system. What do you think?

Herschel Greenberg
hgreenberg@hotmail.com

Unfortunately, there's no word on anything in the *Shining* series coming, but the original *Phantasy Star* team is at work on an RPG for Dreamcast. In the meantime, Ubi Soft is bringing *Evolution* to the US this fall.

➔ In your 09/99 issue, in the *Castlevania: Resurrection* preview, it starts off saying that "If Mario vs. Bowser is the oldest rivalry in videogaming..." Isn't Mario vs. Donkey Kong the oldest?

John
jonjem@usa.net

Interesting point, but since Mario and Donkey Kong each have their own franchises now, it's tough to still call them rivals, except in Mario Kart and *Smash Bros.* That said, there's no other error for us to torture someone over in the issue, so to remind Tom of the original Donkey Kong, we've put him in a oil-rigged barrel, set it on fire, and crushed it with a massive sledge hammer. We hope this satisfies you.

➔ There has been a lot written about *Final Fantasy VII*, and in just about every article I found the word "gag" or something similar after the mention that the main theme in the game is love. Any 15-year-old who still cringes at the sight of the word "love" must really have been spending too much of his time with TV. I think many of the growing buyers who are turning toward this new medium would rather there be more games like this.

Monty1x0@aol.com

Interesting point, but lots of people who can handle loving relationships still want to gaw when they see the incredibly

Oh, simple reader...

In your recent issue's *Retroview* section, you had a cover from 1985. I thought your magazine started in 1995! Is there any way I can get back issues from the 1980s? Just curious.

Brian Williams
Detroit, MI

Uh... um... (OK, we confess, we have no idea how to go with this response. Sorccitic? Candescending! Sincere? Let's just toy with him, shall we?) OK... Actually, Brian, those early issues were, um, limited hardcover editions, so very few exist. You might try eBay, but otherwise, if you want to keep current with what was happening with *Next Generation* "back in the day," keep reading *Retroview*™.

VIDEOGAMING FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM



melodramatic crap that passes for storylines in a lot of RPGs. We've got no problem with love or love interests in games — they're probably a lot more healthy than "kill everything" storylines — but our problem with *FFVIII* was that the creators didn't seem to know how to handle the love in the engaging way we've come to expect from Square's storytelling. We sold it before, and we'll say it again: you'd think, in a love story, that at some point someone would say "I love you."

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Kill the head and the body grows stronger: Atari hits its stride

→ The real world was in turmoil, and the game world was, too — less than two years after selling Atari to Time Warner, Nolan Bushnell, the man who helped start the game industry, was gone from the company he founded. Bushnell, who would go on to even greater success (for a time), with the Chuck E. Cheese pizza parlor/arcade chain, left just as some of Atari's greatest games, such as *Asteroids*, were about to be released.

Bushnell's departure couldn't help Magnavox's *Odyssey*. Developed by Pong creator Ralph Baer (a man Nolan Bushnell once introduced as the "real father of the game industry"), the system seemed to have everything it needed — a keyboard, and better



■ *Asteroids* stormed the arcades, and for a time, vector graphics were king

hardware than the 2600 — but it ultimately would prove to be Magnavox's last entry in the world of videogames.

For consumers, though, this was rapidly becoming the golden age of the 2600 — more and better games were being released, and soon arcade favorites like *Space Invaders* and, yes, *Asteroids* would be coming home.

VIDEOGAMING FOR ME GENERATION

Next Gen

Next Generation Magazine

Sneak Peek: Asteroids

Is this Atari's Space Invaders killer?

BOMBSHELL

Bushnell gone!

Pong creator walks — can Atari survive without his vision?

Odyssey²

We rate Magnavox's super console

Sargon comes to Apple II

What we were playing

An age doesn't get more classic than this

■ BREAKOUT 2600



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

■ SPACE INVADERS



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

■ ADVENTURELAND



■ System: TRS-80
■ Publisher: Adventure Int'l
■ Developer: Adventure Int'l

■ ATARI FOOTBALL

first scrolling game



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

■ SLOT RAGERS



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

Primetime lineup 1978

TUESDAY

8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS The Fitzpatricks	The Fitzpatricks	M*A*S*H	One Day at a Time	Lou Grant
NBC Richard Pryor Show	Richard Pryor Show	Mulligan's Stew	Mulligan's Stew	Police Woman
ABC Happy Days	Laverne & Shirley	Three's Company	Soap	Family

THURSDAY NIGHT

8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS The Waltons	The Waltons	Hawaii 5-0	Hawaii 5-0	Barnaby Jones
NBC CHiPs	CHiPs	Man from Atlantis	Man from Atlantis	Rocelle and Ryan
ABC Welcome Back Kotter	What's Happening	Bonny Miller	Clarke County	Redd Fox Comedy Hour

...and in the real world

■ The 5 1/4 inch floppy becomes standard as Apple, Tandy, and Commodore announce their support for the high-capacity format (Apple disks hold 144K).

■ The first "test tube" baby, Louise Brown, is born in England.

■ Hundreds of people living at Love Canal, New York, see their property values plummet when it turns out their neighborhood has been built atop a massively hazardous toxic-waste dump.

■ People's Temple leader Jim Jones leads a mass suicide massacre, claiming the lives of himself and over 900 followers at Jonestown in Guyana, hours after gunning down Congressman Leo Ryan, who was investigating the cult.

LET THE EVOLUTION



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